YUVAKBHARATI

STANDARD XI

महाराष्ट्र माध्यमिक व उच्च माध्यमिक शिक्षण मंडळ • पुणे •

me to dance on it? Thank you.'

The conjurer made a few rapid passes with his feet and exhibited the hat, crushed beyond recognition.

'And will you now, sir, take off your celluloid collar and permit me to burn it in the candle? Thank you, sir. And will you allow me to smash your spectacles for you with my hammer? Thank you.'

By this time the features of the Quick Man were assuming a puzzled expression. 'This thing beats me,' he whispered, 'I don't see through it a bit.'

There was a great hush upon the audience. Then the conjurer drew himself up to his full height and, with a withering look at the Quick Man, he concluded:

'Ladies and gentlemen, you will observe that I have, with this gentleman's permission, broken his watch, burnt his collar, smashed his spectacles, and danced on his hat. If he will give me the further permission to paint green stripes on his overcoat, or to tie his suspenders in a knot, I shall be delighted to entertain you. If not, the performance is at an end.'

And amid a glorious burst of music from the orchestra the curtain fell, and the audience dispersed, convinced that there are some tricks, at any rate, that are not done up the conjurer's sleeve.

NOTES

Presto: Presto means 'quick' or 'quickly'. It is the magician's exclamation with which he completes his trick successfully.

stupefaction: the state of being dazed

transpired: came to be known

rallied for a final effort: gathered together his strength and energy to make a last effort to gain the approval of the spectators

Tipperary: the name of a town in Ireland. It is used by the magician to produce an effect. (The song, 'It is a long way to Tipperary' was sung by the British soldiers in 1914.)

passes: the movements of hands (or feet) over something (made by a magician)

This thing beats me: I don't understand it at all.

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2 Homage to Mahatma Gandhi

PANDIT JAWAHARLAL NEHRU

Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru (1889-1964) was the first Prime Minister of independent India. He was a distinguished statesman, a writer and an orator. His writings include, *Autobiography, Glimpses of World History* **and** *The Discovery of India.*

Nehru's feelings on the immensity of the loss caused by Gandhiji's death are clearly brought out in the present piece which is a famous speech broadcast by him a few hours after the assassination of Mahatma Gandhi on 30th January, 1948.

FRIENDS and comrades, the light has gone out of our lives and there is darkness everywhere. I do not know what to tell you and how to say it. Our beloved leader, Bapu as we called him, the father of the nation, is no more. Perhaps I am wrong to say that. Nevertheless, we will not see him again as we have seen him for these many years. We will not run to him for advice and seek solace from him, and that is a terrible blow, not to me only, but to millions and millions in this country, and it is a little difficult to soften the blow by any other advice that I or anyone else can give you.

The light has gone out, I said, and yet I was wrong. For the light that shone in this country was no ordinary light. The light that has illumined this country for these many years will illumine this country for many more years, and a thousand years later that light will still be seen in this country and the world will see it and it will give solace to innumerable hearts. For that light represented the living truth ... the eternal truths, reminding us of the right path, drawing us from error, taking this ancient country to freedom.

All this has happened when there was so much more for him to do. We could never think that he was unnecessary or that he

had done his task. But now, particularly, when we are faced with so many difficulties, his not being with us is a blow most terrible to bear.

A madman has put an end to his life, for I can only call him mad who did it, and yet there has been enough of poison spread in this country during the past years and months, and this poison has had effect on people's minds. We must face this poison, we must root out this poison, and we must face all the perils that encompass us and face them not madly or badly but rather in the way that our beloved teacher taught us to face them. The first thing to remember now is that no one of us dare misbehave because we are angry. We have to behave like strong and determined people, determined to face all the perils that surround us, determined to carry out the mandate that our great teacher and our great leader has given us, remembering always that if, as I believe, his spirit looks upon us and sees us, nothing would displease his soul so much as to see that we have indulged in any small behaviour or any violence.

So we must not do that. But that does not mean that we should be weak, but rather that we should in strength and in unity face all the troubles that are in front of us. We must hold together, and all our petty troubles and difficulties and conflicts must be ended in the face of this great disaster. A great disaster is a symbol to us to remember all the big things of life and forget the small things, of which we have thought too much.

It was proposed by some friends that Mahatmaji's body should be embalmed for a few days to enable millions of people to pay their last homage to him. But it was his wish, repeatedly expressed, that no such thing should happen, that this should not be done, that he was entirely opposed to any embalming of his body.

Tomorrow should be a day of fasting and prayer for all of us. Those who live elsewhere out of Delhi and in other parts of India will no doubt also take such part as they can in this last homage. For them also let this be a day of fasting and prayer. And at the appointed time for cremation, that is, four p.m. tomorrow afternoon, people should go to the river or to the sea and offer prayers there. And while we pray, the greatest prayer that we can offer is

to take a pledge to dedicate ourselves to the truth and to the cause for which this great countryman of ours lived and for which he has died.

NOTES

solace: consolation
encompass: surround
mandate: command
nothing would .... indulge in .... violence: His soul would be displeased if we give ourselves up to violence.
embalm: keep a dead body from decaying by using chemicals

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3 An Interview with a Prospective Mother-in-law

OSCAR WILDE

Oscar Wilde (1854-1900) was an Irish playwright, novelist, essayist and poet. His fame rests on the wit and humour of his writings, especially the play, *The Importance of being Earnest,* from which the present extract is taken.

This extract gives us a comic picture of a rich proud female member of the British upper class. Wilde successfully brings out the upper class prejudices through the character of Lady Bracknell.

LADY BRACKNELL (*sitting down*): You can take a seat, Mr. Worthing. (*Looks in her pocket for notebook and pencil.*)

JACK: Thank you, Lady Bracknell, I prefer standing.

LADY BRACKNELL (*pencil and notebook in hand*): I feel bound to tell you that you are not down on my list of eligible young men, although I have the same list as the dear Duchess of Bolton has. We work together, in fact. However, I am quite ready to enter your name, should your answers be what a really affectionate mother requires. Do you smoke?

JACK: Well, yes, I must admit I smoke.

LADY BRACKNELL: I am glad to hear it. A man should always have an occupation of some kind. There are far too many idle men in London as it is. How old are you?

JACK: Twenty-nine.

LADY BRACKNELL: A very good age to be married at. I have always been of the opinion that a man who desires to get married should know either everything or nothing. Which do you know?

JACK (*after some hesitation*): I know nothing, Lady Bracknell.

LADY BRACKNELL: I am pleased to hear it. I do not approve of anything that tampers with natural ignorance. Ignorance is like a delicate exotic fruit; touch it and the bloom is gone. The whole theory of modern education is radically unsound. Fortunately in England, at any rate, education produces no effect whatsoever. If it did, it would prove a serious danger to the upper classes, and probably lead to acts of violence in Grosvenor Square. What is your income?

JACK: Between seven and eight thousand a year.

LADY BRACKNELL (*makes a note in her book*): In land, or in investments?

JACK: Investments, chiefly.

LADY BRACKNELL: That is satisfactory. What between the duties expected of one during one's lifetime, and the duties exacted from one after one's death, land has ceased to be either a profit or a pleasure. It gives one position, and prevents one from keeping it up. That's all that can be said about land.

JACK: I have a country house with some land, of course, attached to it, about fifteen hundred acres, I believe; but I don't depend on that for my real income. In fact, as far as I can make out, the poachers are the only people who make anything out of it.

LADY BRACKNELL: A country house! How many bedrooms? Well, that point can be cleared up afterwards. You have a town house, I hope? A girl with a simple, unspoiled nature, like Gwendolen, could hardly be expected to reside in the country.

JACK: Well, I own a house in Belgrave Square, but it is let by the

year to Lady Bloxham. Of course, I can get it back whenever I like, at six months' notice.

LADY BRACKNELL: Lady Bloxham? I don't know her.

JACK: Oh, she goes about very little. She is a lady considerably advanced in years.

LADY BRACKNELL: Ah, nowadays that is no guarantee of respectability of character. What number in Belgrave Square?

JACK: 149.

LADY BRACKNELL (*shaking her head*): The unfashionable side. I thought there was something. However, that could easily be altered.

JACK: Do you mean the fashion, or the side?

LADY BRACKNELL (*sternly*): Both, if necessary, I presume. What are your politics?

JACK: Well, I am afraid I really have none. I am a Liberal Unionist.

LADY BRACKNELL: Oh, they count as Tories. They dine with us. Or come in the evening, at any rate. Now to minor matters. Are your parents living?

JACK: I have lost both my parents.

LADY BRACKNELL: To lose one parent, Mr. Worthing, may be regarded as a misfortune; to lose both looks like carelessness. Who was your father? He was evidently a man of some wealth. Was he born in what the Radical papers call the purple of commerce, or did he rise from the ranks of the aristocracy?

JACK: I am afraid I really don't know. The fact is, Lady Bracknell, I said I had lost my parents. It would be nearer the truth to say that my parents seem to have lost me .... I don't actually know who I am by birth. I was ... well, I was found.

LADY BRACKNELL: Found!

JACK: The late Mr. Thomas Cardew, an old gentleman of a very charitable and kindly disposition, found me, and gave me the name of Worthing, because he happened to have a first-class ticket for Worthing in his pocket at the time. Worthing is a place in Sussex. It is a seaside resort.

LADY BRACKNELL: Where did the charitable gentleman who had

a first-class ticket for this seaside resort find you?

JACK (*gravely*): In a hand-bag.

LADY BRACKNELL: A hand-bag?

JACK (*very seriously*): Yes, Lady Bracknell, I was in a hand-bag—a somewhat large, black leather hand-bag, with handles to it—an ordinary hand-bag, in fact.

LADY BRACKNELL: In what locality did this Mr. James, or Thomas, Cardew come across this ordinary hand-bag?

JACK: In the cloak-room at Victoria Station. It was given to him in mistake for his own.

LADY BRACKNELL: The cloak-room at Victoria Station?

JACK: Yes. The Brighton line.

LADY BRACKNELL: The line is immaterial. Mr. Worthing, I confess I feel somewhat bewildered by what you have just told me. To be born, or at any rate bred, in a hand-bag, whether it had handles or not, seems to me to display a contempt for the ordinary decencies of family life that reminds one of the worst excesses of the French Revolution. And I presume you know what that unfortunate movement led to? As for the particular locality in which the hand-bag was found, a cloak-room at a railway station might serve to conceal a social indiscretion—has probably, indeed, been used for that purpose before now—but it could hardly be regarded as an assured basis for a recognized position in good society.

JACK: May I ask you then what you would advise me to do? I need hardly say I would do anything in the world to ensure Gwendolen's happiness.

LADY BRACKNELL: I would strongly advise you, Mr. Worthing, to try and acquire some relations as soon as possible, and to make a definite effort to produce at any rate one parent, of either sex, before the season is quite over.

JACK: Well, I don't see how I could possibly manage to do that. I can produce the hand-bag at any moment. It is in my dressing-room at home. I really think that should satisfy you, Lady Bracknell.

LADY BRACKNELL: Me, sir! What has it to do with me? You

can hardly imagine that I and Lord Bracknell would dream of allowing our only daughter—a girl brought up with the utmost care—to marry into a cloak-room, and form an alliance with a parcel. Good morning, Mr. Worthing!

NOTES

you are not down on my list: I don't see your name in my list of eligible young men.

exotic: coming from a foreign country; attractively strange

Grosvenor Square: a square in South London where the rich live

poacher: one who hunts or fishes illegally on another's property

let by the year: rented out on a yearly basis

Liberal Unionist: a member of the Liberal Party which later joined the Conservatives

Tories: the right wing Conservative Party in Great Britain

Radical papers: newspapers dealing with advanced opinions and policies

born ..... in the purple of commerce: purple was the colour worn by Roman Emperors. **Born in the purple** therefore means born in the upper classes. **The purple of commerce**—the top people in the commercial world

Victoria Station: one of the main London railway stations

Brighton line: name of a railway line in England

a social indiscretion: an offence against social conventions or laws

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4 The Englishman and the Russian

K. P. S. MENON

Mr. K. P. S. Menon (b. 1898) joined the ICS in 1921. He was India's Ambassador in many countries of the world and was a diplomat of great repute. He is the author of *Many Worlds, The Flying Troika,* and *Delhi-Chunking.*

In 1952 he was appointed Ambassador to Moscow, where he remained for nearly nine years. 'The Englishman and the Russian' appears in his book, *Yesterday and Today* which is a compilation of several articles published in various journals and magazines. Mr. Menon's impressions of the English and the Russian character make an interesting study.

THE two species of humanity, other than my own, who are best known to me are the Englishman and the Russian. Englishmen I have known ever since I was a child. I have known them as teachers, traders, professors, missionaries and administrators. I have mixed and worked and played with them as students, civil servants and diplomatists. I have lost touch with most of them, except a handful with whom I keep in touch through the English custom of exchanging Christmas cards and occasionally, as over Bangladesh and Vietnam, by indulging in amicably angry correspondence.

I came to know the Russians much later in life. The first Russian I set eyes on was in 1943 in Chungking, the war-time capital of China. In 1952, I was appointed Ambassador in Moscow, and there I remained for nearly nine years. Then I came to know the Russians more intimately; and my frequent visits to the Soviet Union as President of the Indo-Soviet Cultural Society have enabled me to revive old friendships and to form new ones.

'Within the four seas', said Confucius 2500 years ago, 'all men are brothers'. Yet between brother Englishman and brother Russian there is a wide gulf. I am not thinking of political and ideo-

logical differences, which are there for all to see and which have been stressed *ad nauseam,* but rather differences in habits, customs, manners and deportment. It is on these that I shall dwell in this article. After all it is not merely, or primarily, politics which makes the man. New College, one of the oldest colleges of Oxford, founded in the 13th century, has a motto: 'Manners Makyth Man'.

Let us begin with food and drinks. This seems justified, because man spends more years of his life in eating and drinking than in any other activity. Once, Talleyrand, the famous French Foreign Minister, kept a guest waiting for an unconscionably long time when he was having lunch. When his Secretary reminded him that his visitor was a V.I.P., Talleyrand said: 'Let him wait. What other pleasure is there which man can enjoy three times a day and each time lasts an hour?'

In respect of their dietary habits the Englishman and the Russian have one thing in common. Both are tea-drinkers. Mankind can be divided into two classes, tea-drinkers and coffee-drinkers. The Englishman and the Russian belong to the former category. But there the resemblance stops. Even their methods of drinking tea are different. The Englishman drinks it with milk and sugar; the Russian, never with milk and often with a slice of lemon. I myself compromise between both: I drink tea in the English way in the morning and in the afternoon at tea-time, but in between I find the Russian way most refreshing. Neither the Englishman nor the Russian drinks scented tea, mixed with lotus, roses or chrysanthemum as the once dainty Chinese used to do.

One thing the Englishman and the Indian, who is addicted to English habits, have in common is bed tea. Many of us find it impossible to get out of bed in the morning without a cup, or many cups, of tea. In Russia this habit is unknown: one cannot get bed tea for love or money, for the restaurants do not open before 8.

Any irritation at not having had bed tea disappears at the sight of breakfast. The Russian breakfast is a truly gorgeous affair, as compared with English breakfast, which Anglicized Indians also copy, and consists montonously of cornflakes, eggs and toast. In Kuntsevo Hospital on the outskirts of Moscow, where I underwent

an operation, breakfast consisted of tvorak, i.e. powdered milk with sugar and sour cream, freshly cooked porridge instead of pre-fabricated cornflakes, eggs or a meat dish, cheese, sometimes caviare, salad, and bread, brown and white.

Compared to the Englishman, the Russian is a big eater. There was a time when the Englishman too used to have hearty meals, as described in the diaries of Evelyn and Pepys, resulting in gout from which almost all British statesmen used to suffer in the 18th and 19th centuries. When I was a student in England, too, more than half a century ago, the Englishman used to eat fairly well. At my college at Oxford, Christ Church, we used to have a variety of dishes for breakfast: smoked kippers, haddock, kidney on toast, fish kedgeree, etc. That was more than half a century ago. Now, I am told, these are seldom served. Somehow the Englishman seems to have lost the relish for eating. For this, the austerity practised during and after the two world wars, and fashion, which shows itself in a craze for slimming, are responsible.

The Russian must eat more than the Englishman, for he needs more food to keep himself warm in the winter which is much longer and more rigorous. 'The Russian climate', said Voltaire sarcastically though not very accurately, 'consists of nine months of winter and three months of foul weather'. I myself found the Russian summer glorious. Russians, even the women, do not suffer from the passion for slimming. Once a French visitor, in the course of his talk with Khrushchev, commented on the dimensions of middle-aged Russian women. 'They are so sweet in their teens, but by the time they are thirty they are so corpulent. Why do you allow them to get so fat?' said the Frenchman. 'Because', said Khrushchev, 'we want our women to be women and not hollyhocks'.

Until recently, in the absence of an adequate amount of meat and milk, the Russian had to stuff himself with large quantities of bread. The present generation of Russians, however, is taking more nourishing food than at any previous time in Russian history. He, and especially she, have become more figure-conscious too.

It is not food alone which keeps the Russian warm, but drinks. His national drink is vodka, which he affectionately calls 'the sun-

light in the stomach'. However, the idea that Russians are all addicted to vodka or that they are a nation of drunkards is incorrect. Every now and then there is a 'campaign' against drunkenness, and measures are taken to discourage drinking in excess.

The Russian is a hard drinker, but not indiscriminate. He shows his prowess on festive occasions and especially in the presence of foreigners when toast after toast is drunk to 'the eternal and indestructible friendship between our two countries'. Unlike the English custom, where the toast is reserved to the end of the dinner, Russian dinner is punctuated with toasts from the beginning to the end; and with each toast goes down a glass of vodka, cognac, wine or champagne. It has been said that in these days of cocktail parties it does not matter if a diplomat is not strong in the head, but he must be strong on the feet. In Moscow, he must be strong in the liver too.

Temperamentally, the Englishman and the Russian are very different. The Englishman is, by nature, reserved; the Russian, gregarious. It is the Englishman's reserve which sets him apart from his fellow-men. In 1945 when I was at San Francisco to attend the UN Conference, I stayed in a suite in the 8th floor of Hotel Gotham. Once the lift—or, as the Americans call it the elevator—failed; and I complained to the Manager of the Hotel. He expressed his regrets and added that the previous occupant of my room, an Englishman, would not have minded, because he never used the lift and always climbed on foot the eight flights of stairs to his room. When asked why he did not use the lift, the Englishman replied: 'Because I want to avoid the sinister possibility of being spoken to by a stranger on the lift!'

An Englishman would not speak to a stranger unless he is properly introduced to him. Two Englishmen might get into a train or tram or plane and sit side by side for hours without exchanging a word. If one, more inquisitive than the other, were to ask where he is going and what for, he would feel inclined to say, 'mind your business'. Being a gentleman, however, he would pretend to be deaf or feign a headache or profess to be immersed in thought or in a book, even though he might be holding the book upside down.

Very different would be the behaviour of two Russians. They

would start talking at once; and before the journey is over each would know a great deal about the other's family, business, hobbies and ailments. Only, one subject they are unlikely to discuss, politics. The Russian is content to leave high politics to the higher-ups. The Russian takes no pleasure in holding forth on political problems or analysing the personality of their politicians or spreading any scandals associated with their names. On the contrary, politics and politicians form the staple diet of conversation in the West, and especially in the USA, and increasingly in India too.

Americans, and Indians too, have no compunction in washing their dirty linen in public. Not so the Englishman. Dirty linen, however, has to be washed, but in England it is done decorously and never in the presence of foreigners. Towards 'the lesser breeds without the Law', the Englishman's reserve takes imperial overtones. The average British administrator assumed that the only way of winning the respect of the 'natives' was to keep a stiff upper lip. This was certainly not the attitude of all Britishers, and there were many honourable exceptions from A. O. Hume, the founder of the Indian National Congress, to Charles Andrews, intimate friend of Tagore and Gandhi. In any case, the Englishman's cold reserve was infinitely preferable to the bitter bigotry of the Portuguese and the promiscuous familiarity of the French, both of whom left their peoples in the colonies in a far worse plight than the English.

The Englishman's reserve is not confined to foreigners but applies to his own people. 'The Englishman's home', runs a characteristic English proverb, 'is his castle'. It is guarded by an iron curtain of etiquette against the prying eyes of outsiders. The notice, 'Not at home', does not mean that the Englishman is not physically at home, but that he is so happily at home that he does not want to be disturbed.

To the Englishman, 'home' has a much more restricted connotation than to the Russian or the Indian. A home consists of the husband, the wife and the children and no other relations. As soon as a son gets married he moves away from his parents and sets up a home of his own, to which the in-laws are not particularly welcome. They may come very occasionally, after previous intimation,

for a specific number of days, not to be exceeded on any account, but to come without notice and stay indefinitely is to commit a monstrous breach of etiquette.

The Russian home is very different. Invariably it includes a *dedushka* or *babushka*, that is, a grandfather or grandmother. Never is a dedushka or babushka regarded as a nuisance or in the way of even a honeymoon couple. Often they are regarded as venerable antiques to be treated with a mixture of love and reverence, and also amusement if they are given to the primitive habit of praying, making the sign of the Cross or going to church. They are even welcome to take their grandchildren to the church, for the parents are confident that any religious germs, which might enter the spirits of the children, would soon be exorcised at school by a regular course of 'scientific-atheistic education'.

The company of children and especially of grandchildren is a far greater solace to the old people of Russia than the cold comforts of Homes for the Aged in other countries. Moreover, the old folk have a feeling that they are making themselves useful. In Russia both men and women are employed, and when they go out to work it is the babushka who looks after children, tells them stories and takes them out for an airing.

NOTES

a diplomatist: a diplomat
Confucius: Chinese philosopher, whose sayings, recorded after his death, together with the classics which he edited and taught, formed the body of traditional Chinese education.
ad nauseam: to the point of disgust; to a sickening extreme
deportment: the manner of conducting or behaving oneself
'Manners Makyth Man': Manners make man.
unconscionably: unreasonably
chrysanthemum: a flower
dainty: pretty, neat and delicate in appearance and in taste
addicted to: having given oneself up to
gorgeous: splendid
porridge: a soft food made with oatmeal and milk
caviare: the salted eggs of sturgeon, salmon, etc., eaten as an appetizer
Evelyn and Pepys: English diarists of the 17th century. Evelyn's diary is of historical importance while Pepys' is more personal and of interest to the sociologist.

gout: disease causing painful swellings in joints
kippers: salted herring or salmon dried or smoked
haddock: a fish related to the cod (used for food)
kedgeree: a dish of rice, fish, eggs, etc.
Voltaire: French man of letters, historian, and philosopher
Khrushchev: Premier of the U.S.S.R. (1958-1964)
hollyhocks: tall, slim flower-bearing garden plants
indiscriminate: making no distinction
vodka, cognac, wine, champage: intoxicating or alcoholic drinks
a cocktail party: a party before dinner at which mixed alcoholic drinks and light snacks are served
gregarious: sociable
sinister: suggestive of evil or disaster
feign: pretend
wash one's dirty linen in public: discuss unpleasant private matters in public
the lesser breeds without the Law: To the Englishman this meant anyone who was not English—particularly the natives of the colonies
keep a stiff upper lip: show firmness; endure troubles without showing it; here it means to be reserved or firm
bigotry: narrow-mindedness
promiscuous familiarity: undesirable and indiscriminate relationship
Often they are regarded ..... going to church: Often the old people (venerable antiques) are treated with love and respect. However, the children are amused at the religious practices of the older generation as religion is not encouraged in Russia.
exorcise: drive out an evil spirit in the name of God
scientific-atheistic education: education in sciences based on inculcating a belief that there is no God

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5 A Nincompoop

ANTON CHEKHOV

Anton Pavlovich Chekhov (1860-1904), Russian short story writer and dramatist, began writing short humorous stories while studying medicine in Moscow. Though he qualified as a doctor, he adopted writing as his profession. His famous plays include *The Seagull, Uncle Vanya, The Three Sisters* **and** *The Cherry Orchard.*

He has portrayed the helplessly but hopefully struggling people in his works. His observations are exact and penetrating. The story, "A Nincompoop", could be best summed up in the last sentence of the story, "how easy it is to crush the weak in this world."

A FEW days ago I asked my children's governess, Julia Vassilyevna, to come into my study.

'Sit down, Julia Vassilyevna,' I said. 'Let's settle our accounts. Although you most likely need some money, you stand on ceremony and won't ask for it yourself. Now then, we agreed on thirty roubles a month.....'

'Forty.'

'No, thirty. I made a note of it. I always pay the governess thirty. Now then, you've been here two months, so...'

'Two months and five days.'

'Exactly two months. I made a specific note of it. That means you have sixty roubles coming to you. Subtract nine Sundays... you know you didn't work with Kolya on Sundays, you only took walks. And three holidays...'

Julia Vassilyevna flushed a deep red and picked at the flounce of her dress, but—not a word.

'Three holidays, therefore take off twelve roubles. Four days Kolya was sick and there were no lessons, as you were occupied only with Vanya. Three days you had a toothache and my wife gave you permission not to work after lunch. Twelve and seven—nineteen. Subtract...that leaves...hum... forty-one roubles. Correct?'

Julia Vassilyevna's left eye reddened and filled with moisture. Her chin trembled; she coughed nervously and blew her nose, but—not a word.

'Around New Year's you broke a tea cup and a saucer: take off two roubles. The cup cost more, it was an heirloom, but—let it go. When didn't I take a loss! Then, due to your neglect, Kolya climbed a tree and tore his jacket: take away ten. Also due to your heedlessness the maid stole Vanya's shoes. You ought to watch everything! You get paid for it. So, that means five more roubles off. The tenth of January I gave you ten roubles...'

'You didn't,' whispered Julia Vassilyevna.

'But I made a note of it.'

'Well...all right.'

'Take twenty-seven from forty-one—that leaves fourteen.'

Both eyes filled with tears. Perspiration appeared on the thin, pretty little nose. Poor girl!

'Only once was I given any money,' she said in a trembling voice, 'and that was by your wife. Three roubles, nothing more.'

'Really? You see now, and I didn't make a note of it! Take three from fourteen... leaves eleven. Here's your money, my dear. Three, three, three, one and one. Here it is!'

I handed her eleven roubles. She took them and with trembling fingers stuffed them into her pocket.

'*Merci,*' she whispered.

I jumped up and started pacing the room. I was overcome with anger.

'For what, this—"*merci*"?' I asked.

'For the money.'

'But you know I've cheated you, for God's sake—robbed you! I have actually stolen from you! *Why* this "*merci*"?'

'In my other places they didn't give me anything at all.'

'They didn't give you anything? No wonder! I played a little joke on you, a cruel lesson, just to teach you.... I'm going to give you the entire eighty roubles! Here they are in an envelope all ready for you... Is it really possible to be so spineless? Why don't you protest? Why be silent? Is it possible in this world to

be without teeth and claws—to be such a nincompoop?'

She smiled crookedly and I read in her expression: 'It is possible.'

I asked her pardon for the cruel lesson and, to her great surprise, gave her the eighty roubles. She murmured her little *'merci'* several times and went out. I looked after her and thought: 'How easy it is to crush the weak in this world!'

NOTES

nincompoop: simpleton, a foolish person; here, it means a weak and submissive person

stand on ceremony: insist on formal politeness or rigid regard for convention

rouble: unit of Russian currency

pick at the flounce of one's dress: flounce means a strip of cloth or lace gathered and sewn by the upper edge only. The entire phrase describes an action on the part of a woman or a girl revealing shyness or nervousness.

heirloom: a piece of valuable personal property that has been handed down in a family for several generations

merci: Thank you (in French)

spineless: having no courage to protest against injustice; here, without the strength to make decisions

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6 Animal Architects

GERALD DURRELL

Gerald Durrell (b. 1925) was born in India. He specialized in Zoology and he undertook several expeditions to collect animals in the Cameroons, Guyana, Paraguay and Argentina. He wrote a number of books on animal life: *My Family and Other Animals, A Zoo in My Luggage, Beasts in my Belfry,* **etc.**

This extract has been taken from his book *Encounters with Animals.* **He describes in it, with his characteristic simplicity and humour, how some birds, like man, are the builders of beautiful, amazing and strong homes.**

SOME TIME ago I received a small parcel from a friend of mine in India. Inside the box I found a note which read: 'I bet you don't know what this is.' Greatly intrigued, I lifted off the top layer of wrapping paper, and underneath I found what appeared to be two large leaves which had been rather inexpertly sewn together.

My friend would have lost his bet. As soon as I saw the large and rather amateur stitches, I knew what it was: the nest of a tailor bird, a thing I had always wanted to see. The two leaves were about six inches long, shaped rather like laurel leaves, and only the edges had been sewn together, so that it formed a sort of pointed bag. Inside the bag was a neat nest of grass and moss, and inside that were two small eggs. The tailor bird is quite small, about the size of a tit, but with a rather long beak. This is its needle. Having found the two leaves it likes, hanging close together, it then proceeds to sew them together, using fine cotton as thread. The curious thing about it is not so much that the tailor bird stitches the leaves together as that nobody seems to know where he finds the cotton material with which to do the sewing. Some experts insist that he weaves it himself, others that he has some source of supply that has never been discovered. As I say, the stitches were rather large and

inartistic, but then how many people could make a success of sewing up two leaves, using only a beak as a needle?

Architecture in the animal world differs a great deal. Some animals, of course, have only the haziest idea of constructing a suitable dwelling, while others produce most complicated and delightful homes. It is strange that even among closely related animals there should be such a wide variety of taste in the style, situation and size of the home and the choice of materials used in its construction.

In the bird world, of course, one finds homes of every shape and size. They range from the tailor-bird's cradle of leaves to the emperor penguin, who, with nothing but snow for his building, has dispensed with the idea of a nest altogether. The egg is simply carried on the top of the large flat foot, and the skin and feathers of the stomach form a sort of pouch to cover it. Then you have the edible swift who makes a fragile, cup-shaped nest of saliva and bits of twigs and sticks it to the wall of a cave. Among the weaver-birds of Africa, too, the variety of nests is bewildering. One species lives in a community which builds a nest half the size of a haystack, rather like a block of flats, in which each bird has its own nesting-hole. In these gigantic nests you sometimes get an odd variety of creatures living as well as the rightful occupants. Snakes are very fond of them; so are bush-babies and squirrels. One of these nests, if taken to pieces, might display an extraordinary assortment of inmates. No wonder that trees have been known to collapse under the weight of these colossal nests. The common weaver-bird of West Africa builds a neat, round nest, like a small basket woven from palm fibres. They also live in communities and hang their nests on every available branch of a tree, until it seems festooned with some extraordinary form of fruit. In the most human way the brilliant and shrill-voiced owners go about the business of courting, hatching eggs, feeding their young, and bickering with their neighbours, so that the whole thing rather resembles an odd sort of council estate.

To construct their nests, the weaver-birds have become adept not only at weaving but at tying knots, for the nest is strapped very firmly to the branch and requires considerable force to remove it.

I once watched a weaver-bird starting its nest, a fascinating performance. He had decided that the nest should hang from the end of a delicate twig half-way up a tree, and he arrived on the spot carrying a long strand of palm fibre in his beak. He alighted on the branch, which at once swung to and fro so that he had to flap his wings to keep his balance. When he was fairly steady he juggled with the palm fibre until he got to the centre of it. Then he tried to drape it over the branch, so that the two ends hung one side and the loop hung the other. The branch still swayed about, and twice he dropped the fibre and had to fly down to retrieve it, but at last he got it slung over the branch to his satisfaction. He then placed one foot on it to keep it in position and leaning forward precariously he pulled the two dangling ends from one side of the branch through the loop on the other and tugged it tight. After this he flew for some more fibre and repeated the performance. He went on in this way for the whole day, until by evening he had twenty or thirty pieces of fibre lashed to the branch, the ends dangling down like a beard.

Unfortunately I missed the following stages in the construction of this nest, and I next saw it empty, for the bird had presumably reared its young and moved off. The nest was flask-shaped—a small round entrance, guarded by a small porch of plaited fibre. I tried to pull the nest off the branch, but it was impossible, and in the end I had to break the whole branch off. Then I tried to tear the nest in half so that I could examine the inside. But so intricately interlaced and knotted were the palm fibres that it took me a long time and all my strength before I could do so. It was really an incredible construction, when you consider the bird had only its beak and its feet for tools.

When I went to Argentina four years ago I noticed that nearly every tree-stump or rail-post in the pampa was decorated with a strange earthenware construction about the size and shape of a football. At first, I believed they were termite nests, for they were very similar to a common feature of the landscape in West Africa. It was not until I saw, perched on top of one of them, a small tubby bird about the size of a robin with a rusty-red back and grey shirt-

front that I realized they were the nests of the oven-bird.

As soon as I found an unoccupied nest, I carefully cut it in half and was amazed at the skill with which it had been built. Wet mud had been mixed with tiny fragments of dried grass, roots and hair to act as reinforcement. The sides of the nest were approximately an inch and a half thick. The outside had been left rough—unrendered, as it were—but the inside had been smoothed to a glass-like finish. The entrance to the nest was a small arched hole, rather like a church door, which led into a narrow passage-way that curved round the outer edge of the nest and eventually led into the circular nesting-chamber lined with a pad of soft roots and feathers. The whole thing rather resembled a snail shell.

Although I searched a large area, I was never lucky enough to find a nest that had been newly started, for it was fairly well into the breeding season. But I did find one half-completed. Oven-birds are very common in Argentina, and in the way they move and cock their heads on one side and regard you with their shining dark eyes, they reminded me very much of the English robin. The pair building this nest took no notice of me whatever, provided I remained at a distance of about twelve feet, though occasionally they would fly over to take a closer look at me, and after inspecting me with their heads on one side, they would flap their wings as though shrugging, and return to their building work. The nest, as I say, was half-finished: the base was firmly cemented on to a fence-post and the outer walls and inner wall of the passage-way were already some four or five inches high. All that remained now was for the whole thing to be covered with the domed roof.

The nearest place for wet mud was about half a mile away at the edge of a shallow lagoon. They would hop round the edge of the water in a fussy, rather pompous manner, testing the mud every few feet. It had to be of exactly the right consistency. Having found a suitable patch, they would hop about excitedly, picking up tiny rootlets and bits of grass until their beaks were full and they looked as though they had suddenly sprouted large walrus moustaches. They would carry these beakfuls of reinforcement down to the mud patch, and then, by skilful juggling, without dropping the

material, pick up a large amount of mud as well. By a curious movement of the beak they matted the two materials together until their walrus moustaches looked distinctly bedraggled and mud-stained. Then, with a muffled squeak of triumph, they flew off to the nest. Here the bundle was placed in the right position and pecked and trampled on and pushed until it had firmly adhered to the original wall. Then they entered the nest and smoothed off the new patch, using their beaks, their breasts and even the sides of their wings to get the required shining finish.

When only a small patch on the very top of the roof needed to be finished, I took some bright scarlet threads of wool down to the edge of the lagoon and scattered them around the place where the oven-birds gathered their material. On my next trip down there, to my delight, they had picked them up, and the result, a small russét bird apparently wearing a bright scarlet moustache, was quite startling. They incorporated the wool into the last piece of building on the nest, and it was, I feel sure, the only Argentinian oven-bird's nest on the pampa flying what appeared to be a small red flag at half-mast.

If the oven-bird is a master-builder, whose nest is so solid that it takes several blows of a hammer to demolish it, members of the pigeon family go to the opposite extreme. They have absolutely no idea of proper nest-making. Four or five twigs laid across a branch: that is the average pigeon's idea of a highly complicated structure. On this frail platform the eggs, generally two, are laid. Every time the tree sways in the wind this silly nest trembles and shakes and the eggs almost fall out. How any pigeon ever reaches maturity is a mystery to me.

I knew that pigeons were stupid and inefficient builders, but I never thought that their nests might prove an irritating menace to a naturalist. When I was in Argentina I learned differently. On the banks of a river outside Buenos Aires I found a small wood. The trees, only about thirty feet high, were occupied by what might almost be called a pigeon colony. Every tree had about thirty or forty nests in it. Walking underneath the branches you could see the fat bellies of the young, or the gleam of the eggs, through the

carelessly arranged twigs. The nests looked so insecure that I felt like walking on tip-toe for fear that my footsteps would destroy the delicate balance.

In the centre of the wood I found a tree full of pigeons' nests but for some odd reason devoid of pigeons. At the very top of the tree I noticed a great bundle of twigs and leaves which was obviously a nest of some sort and equally obviously not a pigeon's nest. I wondered if it was the occupant of this rather untidy bundle of stuff that had made the pigeons desert all the nests in the tree. I decided to climb and see if the owner was at home. Unfortunately, it was only when I had started to climb that I realized my mistake, for nearly every pigeon's nest in the tree contained eggs, and as I made my way slowly up the branches my movements created a sort of waterfall of pigeon eggs which bounced and broke against me, smearing my coat and trousers with yolk and bits of shell. I would not have minded this so much, but every single egg was well and truly addled, and by the time I had reached the top of the tree, hot and sweating, I smelt like a cross between a tannery and a sewage farm. To add insult to injury, I found that the occupant of the nest I had climbed up to was out, so I had gained nothing by my climb except a thick coating of egg and a scent that would have made a skunk envious. Laboriously I climbed down the tree again, looking forward to the moment when I would reach ground and could light a cigarette, to take the strong smell of rotten egg out of my nostrils. The ground under the tree was littered with broken eggs tastefully interspersed with the bodies of a few baby pigeons in a decomposed condition. I made my way out into the open as quickly as possible. With a sigh of relief, I sat down and reached into my pocket for my cigarettes. I drew them out dripping with egg-yolk. At some point during my climb, by some curious chance, an egg had fallen into my pocket and broken. My cigarettes were ruined. I had to walk two miles home without a smoke, breathing in a strong aroma of egg and looking as though I had rather unsuccessfully taken part in an omelette-making competition. I have never really liked pigeons since then.

NOTES

amateur stitches: stitches which were made imperfectly
laurel leaves: smooth, shiny leaves of an evergreen shrub, used by the ancient Greeks and Romans as an emblem of victory
tit: a kind of small bird
penguin: a common sea-bird found in the Antarctic region
haystack: a large pile of grass cut and dried (for use as food by animals)
bush-baby: a small animal of the monkey family found in Africa
assortment: collection of examples of one class or several classes
festooned: decorated with chains of leaves and flowers
pampa: large grassland in Argentina
termite: an insect called 'white ant', mostly found in tropical areas
reinforcement: that which makes stronger
unrendered: not plastered
robin: a small brownish bird with red feathers on its breast
shrug: show indifference by lifting the shoulders slightly; here, the bird moves its wings in a way that suggests shrugging
lagoon: a large salt-water lake separated from the sea by sand bank or coral reef
walrus moustaches: large moustaches of which the ends come downwards like the tusks of a walrus (a large sea-animal)
tannery: a place where skins are processed
add insult to injury: make an already bad situation worse
skunk: a North American animal, which sends out a very strong stinking smell as a defence when attacked

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7 Inaugural Address

JOHN F. KENNEDY

John Fitzgerald Kennedy (1917-1963), the 35th President of the U.S.A. (1961-1963), was a Democrat. He was the youngest man ever elected President, and the first Roman Catholic to hold this office.

The following piece is the Inaugural Address of the President when he assumed office.

WE observe today not a victory of party but a celebration of freedom, symbolizing an end as well as a beginning, signifying renewal as well as change. For I have sworn before you and

Almighty God the same solemn oath our forebears prescribed nearly a century and three-quarters ago.

The world is very different now. For man holds in his mortal hands the power to abolish all forms of human poverty and all forms of human life. And yet the same revolutionary belief for which our forebears fought is still at issue around the globe, the belief that the rights of man come not from the generosity of the state but from the hand of God.

We dare not forget today that we are the heirs of that first revolution. Let the word go forth from this time and place, to friend and foe alike, that the torch has been passed to a new generation of Americans, born in this century, tempered by war, disciplined by a hard and bitter peace, proud of our ancient heritage, and unwilling to witness or permit the slow undoing of these human rights to which this nation has always been committed, and to which we are committed today at home and around the world.

Let every nation know, whether it wishes us well or ill, that we shall pay any price, bear any burden, meet any hardship, support any friend, oppose any foe to assure the survival and the success of liberty.

This much we pledge—and more.

To those old allies whose cultural and spiritual origins we share, we pledge the loyalty of faithful friends. United, there is little we cannot do in a host of co-operative ventures. Divided, there is little we can do, for we dare not meet a powerful challenge at odds and split asunder.

To those new states whom we welcome to the ranks of the free, we pledge our word that one form of colonial control shall not have passed away merely to be replaced by a far more iron tyranny. We shall not always expect to find them supporting our view. But we shall always hope to find them strongly supporting their own freedom, and to remember that, in the past, those who foolishly sought power by riding the back of the tiger ended up inside.

To those peoples in the huts and villages of half the globe struggling to break the bonds of mass misery, we pledge our best efforts to help them help themselves, for whatever period is required, not

because the Communists may be doing it, not because we seek their votes, but because it is right. If a free society cannot help the many who are poor, it cannot save the few who are rich.

To our sister republics south of our border, we offer a special pledge: to convert our good words into good deeds, in a new alliance for progress, to assist free men and free governments in casting off the chains of poverty. But this peaceful revolution of hope cannot become the prey of hostile powers. Let all our neighbours know that we shall join with them to oppose aggression or subversion anywhere in the Americas. And let every other power know that this hemisphere intends to remain the master of its own house.

To that world assembly of sovereign states, the United Nations, our last best hope in an age where the instruments of war have far outpaced the instruments of peace, we renew our pledge of support: to prevent it from becoming merely a forum for invective, to strengthen its shield of the new and the weak, and to enlarge the area in which its writ may run.

Finally, to those nations who would make themselves our adversary, we offer not a pledge but a request: that both sides begin anew the quest for peace, before the dark powers of destruction unleashed by science engulf all humanity in planned or accidental self-destruction.

We dare not tempt them with weakness. For only when our arms are sufficient beyond doubt can we be certain beyond doubt that they will never be employed.

But neither can two great and powerful groups of nations take comfort from our present course—both sides overburdened by the cost of modern weapons, both rightly alarmed by the steady spread of the deadly atom, yet both racing to alter that uncertain balance of terror that stays the hand of mankind's final war.

So let us begin anew, remembering on both sides that civility is not a sign of weakness, and sincerity is always subject to proof. Let us never negotiate out of fear, but let us never fear to negotiate.

Let both sides explore what problems unite us instead of belabouring those problems which divide us.

Let both sides, for the first time, formulate serious and precise proposals for the inspection and control of arms, and bring the absolute power to destroy other nations under the absolute control of all nations.

Let both sides seek to invoke the wonders of science instead of its terrors. Together let us explore the stars, conquer the deserts, eradicate disease, tap the ocean depths and encourage the arts and commerce.

Let both sides unite to heed in all corners of the earth the command of Isaiah to "undo the heavy burdens ... (and) let the oppressed go free."

And if a beachhead of co-operation may push back the jungle of suspicion, let both sides join in creating a new endeavour, not a new balance of power, but a new world of law, where the strong are just and the weak secure and the peace preserved.

All this will not be finished in the first one hundred days. Nor will it be finished in the first one thousand days, nor in the life of this Administration, nor even perhaps in our lifetime on this planet. But let us begin.

In your hands, my fellow citizens, more than mine, will rest the final success or failure of our course. Since this country was founded, each generation of Americans has been summoned to give testimony to its national loyalty. The graves of young Americans who answered the call to service surround the globe.

Now the trumpet summons us again—not as a call to bear arms, though arms we need; not as a call to battle, though embattled we are; but a call to bear the burden of a long twilight struggle, year in and year out, "rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation," a struggle against the common enemies of man: tyranny, poverty, disease and war itself.

Can we forge against these enemies a grand and global alliance, North and South, East and West, that can assure a more fruitful life for all mankind? Will you join in that historic effort?

In the long history of the world, only a few generations have been granted the role of defending freedom in its hour of maximum danger. I do not shrink from this responsibility; I welcome

it. I do not believe that any of us would exchange places with any other people or any other generation. The energy, the faith, the devotion which we bring to this endeavour will light our country and all who serve it, and the glow from that fire can truly light the world.

And so, my fellow Americans, ask not what your country can do for you; ask what you can do for your country.

My fellow citizens of the world, ask not what America will do for you, but what together we can do for the freedom of man.

Finally, whether you are citizens of America or citizens of the world, ask of us here the same high standards of strength and sacrifice which we ask of you. With a good conscience our only sure reward, with history the final judge of our deeds, let us go forth to lead the land we love, asking His blessing and His help, but knowing that here on earth God's work must truly be our own.

NOTES

party: refers to the Democratic Party
forebears: ancestors
a century and three quarters ago: refers to the time when America became independent
tempered by war: hardened by war
split asunder: tear to pieces
forum for invective: an institution or public place using violently abusive language
writ: a written command issued by a supreme authority; (Here, the authority is the United Nations Organization.)
beachhead: a fortified position established on a beach by an invading army; here, a united front or a strong foothold

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8 The Interview

V. V. JOHN

Prof. V. V. John (b. 1910) is a distinguished Indian educationist and journalist. He has written many books on the problems of education in India: *The Orbiting Professor, Education and Language Policy, The Great Classroom Hoax,* etc.

"The Interview", which is charged with satiric humour, is one of the essays from his book *Light Luggage*. In this essay, the author light-heartedly exposes some of the characteristic inconsistencies and follies of interviewers.

THE candidate was being interviewed for a teaching post in a college. "Have you read Aldous Huxley's *Authority and Reality*?" asked one of the inquisitors. "Perhaps you are referring to *Authority and the Individual* by Bertrand Russell, sir?" countered the candidate.

Perhaps he was. Or maybe, to *Illusion and Reality* by Christopher Caudwell. We shall never know, for it is not one of the episodes that the venerable gentleman is likely to include in his forthcoming reminiscences. Needless to say, the candidate did not get the job. And let that be a warning to young people who presume to be more knowledgeable than the knowledgeable elders on the selection board. A little learning may be a dangerous thing. A lot of it could be disastrous. Instead, answer a fool according to his folly. That is the way to land jobs.

I wouldn't altogether blame the selection boards, though. They are expected to assess the comparative suitability of a young man, among many young men, by talking to him for fifteen minutes. Even the gods would not be able to do this without jumping to conclusions. I knew a candidate for employment who, his own wardrobe being meagre, borrowed a silk suit for the occasion in order to impress the selection board. He impressed them all right, but

not quite the way he intended. For, as he left the room after the interview, the chairman of the board turned to his colleagues, and observed disdainfully: "Rather a dandy, I thought." The young man did not get the job.

This prejudice against finery is not general. There was a high functionary with whom no seeker after jobs had any success unless the crease of his trousers was perfect. He was also particular that the candidate's pronunciation of English should be faultless, though he himself used to pronounce 'stifle' so as to rhyme with 'piffle,' and was unaware that 'tiny' and 'tinny' were not pronounced alike. All things else, including the candidate's special aptitude and qualifications for the job in question, were of subsidiary importance. This attitude, which is fairly common, must be responsible for the ascendancy of the sleek and slick multitude that is currently holding down comfortable jobs up and down the country.

It is about time that something was done about the unequal contest of the average interview. "Have you any hobbies?" "Who is your favourite author?" "What is strontium 90?" "What do you think of apartheid?" "How does jet propulsion work?" And so on and so forth. For the greatest fool may ask more questions than the wisest man can answer.

If appointing authorities were sportsmen, they would make it an equal contest, allowing candidates to ask questions in their turn, and giving jobs to those who can outwit the interviewing boards in the shortest possible time.

The tables would then be turned too often for the comfort of the mighty Olympians. "Can you briefly explain the theory of Relativity?" the inquisitor would ask. "No, sir. But can you?" would be the candidate's reply. Under the old dispensation, the inquisitor could solemnly remind the candidate: "Young man, don't forget we are interviewing you!" But under the more sporting arrangement I recommend, the old chap will have to acknowledge his inability to explain Relativity briefly or at length.

And then the candidate would start his innings. "Why, sir, is it that the sun shines only during the day and not at night?" "In a plane travelling faster than sound, can you, sir, converse audibly

with a fellow passenger?" And finally, "Sir, how high is up?" And if that doesn't get him, please let me know.

NOTES

Aldous Huxley: British novelist, essayist, and thinker; author of the well known *Brave New World*

inquisitor: The Inquisition was a court of inquiry set up by the Roman Catholic Church to inquire into heresy, i.e. contrary beliefs. It was notorious for the torture meted out to the victims. Here, it means one of the members of the board of interviewers.

Bertrand Russell: famous British philosopher and mathematician

dandy: a man who pays too much attention to his clothes and personal appearance

finery: smartness of clothes and appearance

functionary: person with official functions or duties

ascendancy of ..... multitude: the increasing domination of the well-dressed but not so competent people

strontium 90: deadly radio-active isotope of the element Strontium. It is present in the fallout of nuclear explosion.

apartheid: a term used to denote the policy of racial segregation in South Africa

The tables would then be turned: The effect would be the opposite. The interviewers would be in trouble instead.

Olympians: The gods who lived on Mt. Olympus in Greece. Here, it means the members of the interview board.

the theory of relativity: Albert Einstein's famous theory which explains the relation of Time, Motion and Space to one another

the old dispensation: the old order

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9 The Changing World

G. C. THORNLEY

G. C. Thornley is well known as a writer of textbooks. He has also compiled a few anthologies with a view to using literature as a means of teaching language.

The following is a selection from his book *Changing Horizons.* **It surveys the present day world with its startling inventions and achievements.**

THE world into which we all come has been left to us by our fathers and their fathers before them. It is composed more of the past than of the present. The cities and villages in which we all live were built by hands other than ours, and the railways that carry us from place to place were planned and constructed by men who are now probably dead. Everything around us is due, in whole or in part, to the skill, labour and energy of those who went before us along the road of life.

As each of us grows up and becomes acquainted with the world that other men have built, he explores it with interest, and sometimes with anxiety and even fear. For our surroundings are complicated and astonishing, kind and cruel, varied and vast. They are also constantly changing.

No generation leaves the world as it finds it. We shall change our cities and villages, just as men have done in the past. The great and wonderful city of Babylon consists now of ruins buried in the ground, and its glories are forgotten. Cities, like people, grow and die; they increase or decrease in importance. All such changes are the result of the restless energies of man. The generation now growing up will have the same energies and will not be satisfied with what it finds in the world. Some of us will invent new machines or instruments; some will suggest new scientific theories; some will explore new places or new regions of thought. Every fresh mind is different from every other mind of the present or the past, and it

may have a contribution to make to the progress of mankind. And so the changes continue, for better or for worse.

In the last century the speed of these changes in many of men's fields of activity has enormously increased. There was not a great deal of difference between a Roman chariot and an eighteenth-century gentleman's carriage. Both were pulled by horses and the construction of the two vehicles was much the same. The sound of traffic outside a Roman and an eighteenth-century window was in each case the sound of horses' hoofs, yet the interval was a period of about 2,000 years. But the difference between the first locomotives and a motor-car or aeroplane of today, less than a century and a half later, is apparent to everyone. Stephenson's 'Rocket' could move at 35 miles per hour; aeroplanes now can fly at speeds exceeding the speed of sound. Even the aeroplane in which Bleriot crossed the English Channel looks old-fashioned to us, and we may be rather surprised, when we see a picture of it, that it could fly at all. The television receiver which we watch every day and accept as part of the furniture would have astonished and perhaps frightened the people of the last century. We live in a changing world of speed and of scientific invention.

The increasing rate of advance of science is in some ways more than surprising—it is alarming. Men now have the power to destroy the whole human race by means of atomic bombs. The invention of the steam-engine and the first locomotives, when iron for the first time in the history of the world moved by itself from one place to another, started a process which has widened, has developed, and has now brought us to the atomic age. In the next century we may be sure that the speed of discovery and invention will increase further (if there are still men on earth), and indeed it is difficult to picture the world as it will be in the year 2050.

Newspaper headlines are an indication of our changing world. What would our forefathers say if they could read a newspaper of today? They would notice that the events of yesterday in distant places of the earth were fully described. They would read of atomic submarines which travel under the ice of the North Pole. They would read that Satellite III could be seen north-west of London at

three o'clock in the morning, and they would not understand at all what Satellite III meant. They would notice that the world now contains instruments that can calculate in a few minutes what an expert mathematician cannot calculate in a year. They would read of some kind of machine which the papers call a flying saucer.

They would be astonished at these things and they might not even believe them. But the people of the modern world are becoming quite accustomed to new machines, new instruments and new theories.

The changes in the scientific world are mostly in the direction of progress. In medicine we have new drugs that can quickly cure illnesses which either killed our forefathers, or at least kept them in bed for weeks. Operations are now performed on the human brain and heart, and we accept such wonders as normal events. Yet even a modern viewer may be rather astonished when he watches on a television screen the heart of a fish still beating and alive in a liquid contained in a glass vessel.

Machines now do much of the work which men and women used to do with their muscles. Usually the machines do the work better and more quickly; and they do not get tired. The farmer of the past used a wooden plough pulled by a horse, and he cut the golden grain by hand. Nowadays both ploughing and reaping are done by machines. If his crops are attacked by disease, aeroplanes fly over them and spray them with gas to kill the pests.

It is not long since most women spent long periods of time washing the pots used for meals and washing the clothes worn by the family. Different machines can now do both and can help the woman of the house in other ways. There are machines which can remove dust from the carpets and cushions; others can keep the food cold and in good condition. The machine in all walks of life is taking over from men and women the hard and uninteresting duties which muscles used to do.

But the farmer's tractor and the woman's washing-machine have to be kept in good order; for machines sometimes break down and cease to work properly. The number of mechanics in the world is therefore increasing, and a man who in past ages would have spent

his life in the fields now lives most of it indoors among tools and machines.

The structure of society is changing too. The so-called workman, the man who used his hands more than his brain, is better off than he used to be and works for a smaller number of hours in the week. The increasing part played by machines enables work to be done more quickly, and so there is more spare time for everyone. More work is done in less time, and on the whole the individual lives a happy life.

Buildings have changed a great deal in size and shape through the ages, though religion has had a powerful influence on some of the grandest structures. The Great Pyramid of Giza was a tomb—plain, huge magnificent. The Greek temples have never been surpassed in their own style—and how different they are from a pyramid! The European cathedrals of the Middle Ages were different again, and modern cathedrals are entirely unlike them. Nothing remains the same.

But all changes are not necessarily for the better. Where, in our modern world, is a Beethoven, a Bach or a Brahms? Modern music is varied, but none of it reaches the standards set by those great composers of the past. Is a play of today a great advance on Shakespeare's plays? Are the films that we see at the cinema always of great artistic merit? Has the sculpture of Ancient Greece ever been surpassed?

Such thoughts need not depress us. We have much of the past with us, and no one can expect complete progress in every field of man's activity. Mistakes will always be made; for the only man who never makes a mistake is the man who never does anything; and we can learn from our mistakes.

Some people have hated the results of modern scientific and engineering advance, and have wished that they could return to the life of earlier days to find peace and content. But if we could do that, we should not like that life. In the eighteenth century it was difficult even to have a bath. Hot-water systems were unknown, and no one in northern Europe enjoys a cold bath in the depths of winter. It takes time to heat enough water on an ordinary fire to

fill a shallow bath placed in a bedroom, and it takes more time to carry it upstairs. In those days, therefore, the taking of a bath was an unusual event, and many of the eighteenth-century people were, in fact, dirty; and so were their clothes.

The people of the past were badly off in other ways. Many of the houses were small, dark and uncomfortable; and those who lived in them, both men and women, worked for long hours six days a week. Disease was common, and the death-rate high. Nor was it easy to travel from place to place; some people, indeed, lived and died in one village and never saw any other part of the country. To us, also, their lives would seem slow and dull.

Every man is conditioned by the age in which he lives, and if he were to return to another age, he would not be happy. We should hate to be cave-men; and no doubt a cave-man would be bewildered and miserable in a modern house. He would be alarmed by the various engineering wonders which we accept without thinking about them; and we depend more than we may remember on the advantages which science has brought us.

NOTES

Babylon: a city in West Asia referred to in the Bible. It was a seat of ancient civilization

Stephenson: George Stephenson (1781-1848) — the inventor of the steam locomotive (engine)

Rocket: the name of the engine invented by Stephenson

Bleriot: Louis Bleriot — French aviator who made the first flight across the English Channel in 1909

flying saucers: disc-shaped objects claimed to have been seen in the sky and presumed to be from outer space

Giza: Egyptian town on the river Nile near where the pyramids are located

Beethoven, Bach, Brahms: famous composers of Western music

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10 Ha'penny

ALAN PATON

Alan Paton (b. 1903) was born in Pietermaritzburg, Natal. He was educated at Pietermaritzburg College where he taught afterwards. While teaching in Ixopo, he wrote his famous *Cry, the Beloved Country*. A few years later he was appointed Principal of Diepkloof Reformatory for African lads in Johannesburg which he transformed from a prison to a school.

This story "Ha'penny" is taken from his book *Debbie Go Home*. It is the tragic tale of a boy in a reformatory who, being an orphan, craves for a family.

OF the six hundred boys at the reformatory, about one hundred were from ten to fourteen years of age. My Department had from time to time expressed the intention of taking them away, and of establishing a special institution for them, more like an industrial school than a reformatory. This would have been a good thing, for their offences were very trivial, and they would have been better by themselves. Had such a school been established, I should have liked to be Principal of it myself, for it would have been an easier job; small boys turn instinctively towards affection, and one controls them by it, naturally and easily.

Some of them, if I came near them, either on parade or in school or at football, would observe me watchfully, not directly or fully, but obliquely and secretly; sometimes I would surprise them at it, and make some small sign of recognition, which would satisfy them so that they would cease to observe me, and would give their full attention to the event of the moment. But I knew that my authority was thus confirmed and strengthened.

The secret relations with them were a source of continuous pleasure to me. Had they been my own children I would no doubt have given a greater expression to it. But often I would move through the silent and orderly parade, and stand by one of them.

He would look straight in front of him with a little frown of concentration that expressed both childish awareness of and manly indifference to my nearness. Sometimes I would tweak his ear, and he would give me a brief smile of acknowledgement, or frown with still greater concentration. It was natural, I suppose, to confine these outward expressions to the very smallest, but they were taken as symbolic, and some older boys would observe them and take themselves to be included. It was a relief, when the reformatory was passing through times of turbulence and trouble, and when there was danger of estrangement between authority and boys, to make these simple and natural gestures, which were reassurances to both me and them that nothing important had changed.

On Sunday afternoon when I was on duty I would take my car to the reformatory and watch the free boys being signed out at the gate. This simple operation was also watched by many boys not free, who would tell each other, 'In so many weeks I'll be signed out myself.' Among the watchers were always some of the small boys, and these I would take by turns in the car. We would go out to the Potchefstroom Road with its ceaseless stream of traffic, and to the Baragwanath crossroads, and come back by the Van Wyksrus road to the reformatory. I would talk to them about their families, their parents, their sisters and brothers, and I would pretend to know nothing of Durban, Port Elizabeth, Potchefstroom, and Clocolan, and ask them if these places were bigger than Johannesburg.

One of the small boys was Ha'penny, and he was about twelve years old. He came from Bloemfontein and was the biggest talker of them all. His mother worked in a white person's house, and he had two brothers and two sisters. His brothers were Richard and Dickie, and his sisters Anna and Mina.

'Richard and Dickie?' I asked.

'Yes, meneer'.

'In English,' I said, 'Richard and Dickie are the same name.'

When we returned to the reformatory, I sent for Ha'penny's papers; there it was plainly set down, Ha'penny was a waif, with no relatives at all. He had been taken in from one home to another,

but he was naughty and uncontrollable, and eventually had tak to pilfering at the market.

I then sent for the Letter Book, and found that Ha'penny wrote regularly, or rather that others wrote for him till he could write himself, to Mrs. Betty Maarman, of 48 Vlak Street, Bloemfontein. But Mrs. Maarman had never once replied to him. When questioned, he had said, perhaps she is sick. I sat down and wrote at once to the Social Welfare Officer at Bloemfontein, asking him to investigate.

The next time I had Ha'penny out in the car I questioned him again about his family. And he told me the same as before, his mother, Richard and Dickie, Anna and Mina. But he softened the 'D' of Dickie, so that it sounded now like Tickie.

'I thought you said Dickie,' I said.

'I said Tickie,' he said.

He watched me with concealed apprehension, and I came to the conclusion that this waif of Bloemfontein was a clever boy, who had told me a story that was all imagination, and had changed one single letter of it to make it safe from any question. And I thought I understood it all too, that he was ashamed of being without a family and had invented them all, so that no one might discover that he was fatherless and motherless and that no one in the world cared whether he was alive or dead. This gave me a strong feeling for him, and I went out of my way to manifest towards him that fatherly care that the State, though not in those words, had enjoined upon me by giving me this job.

Then the letter came from the Social Welfare Officer in Bloemfontein, saying that Mrs. Betty Maarman of 48 Vlak Street was a real person, and that she had four children, Richard and Dickie, Anna and Mina, but that Ha'penny was no child of hers, and she knew him only as a derelict of the streets. She had never answered his letters, because he wrote to her as 'Mother', and she was no mother of his, nor did she wish to play any such role. She was a decent woman, a faithful member of the church, and she had no thought of corrupting her family by letting them have anything to do with such a child.

But Ha'penny seemed to me anything but the usual delinquent; his desire to have a family was so strong, and his reformatory record was so blameless, and his anxiety to please and obey so great, that I began to feel a great duty towards him. Therefore I asked him about his 'mother'.

He could not speak enough of her, nor with too high praise. She was loving, honest, and strict. Her home was clean. She had affection for all her children. It was clear that the homeless child, even as he had attached himself to me, would have attached himself to her; he had observed her even as he had observed me, but did not know the secret of how to open her heart, so that she would take him in, and save him from the lonely life that he led.

'Why did you steal when you had such a mother?' I asked.

He could not answer that; not all his brains nor his courage could find an answer to such a question, for he knew that with such a mother he would not have stolen at all.

'The boy's name is Dickie,' I said, 'not Tickie.'

And then he knew the deception was revealed. Another boy might have said, 'I told you it was Dickie', but he was too intelligent for that; he knew that if I had established that the boy's name was Dickie, I must have established other things too. I was shocked by the immediate and visible effect of my action. His whole brave assurance died within him, and he stood there exposed, not as a liar, but as a homeless child who had surrounded himself with mother, brothers, and sisters, who did not exist. I had shattered the very foundations of his pride, and his sense of human significance.

He fell sick at once, and the doctor said it was tuberculosis. I wrote at once to Mrs. Maarman, telling her the whole story, of how this small boy had observed her, and had decided that she was the person he desired for his mother. But she wrote back saying that she could take no responsibility for him. For one thing, Ha'penny was a Mosuto, and she was a coloured woman; for another, she had never had a child in trouble, and how could she take such a boy?

Tuberculosis is a strange thing; sometimes it manifests itself suddenly in the most unlikely host, and swiftly sweeps to the end. Ha'penny withdrew himself from the world, from all Principals and

mothers, and the doctor said there was little hope. In desperation I sent money for Mrs. Maarman to come.

She was a decent, homely woman, and seeing that the situation was serious, she, without fuss or embarrassment, adopted Ha'penny for her own. The whole reformatory accepted her as his mother. She sat the whole day with him, and talked to him of Richard and Dickie, Anna and Mina, and how they were all waiting for him to come home. She poured out her affection on him, and had no fear of his sickness, nor did she allow it to prevent her from satisfying his hunger to be owned. She talked to him of what they would do when he came back, and how he would go to the school, and what they would buy for Guy Fawkes night.

He in his turn gave his whole attention to her, and when I visited him he was grateful, but I had passed out of his world. I felt judged in that I had sensed only the existence and not the measure of his desire. I wished I had done something sooner, more wise, more prodigal.

We buried him on the reformatory farm, and Mrs. Maarman said to me, 'When you put up the cross, put he was my son.'

'I'm ashamed,' she said, 'that I wouldn't take him.'

'The sickness,' I said, 'the sickness would have come.'

'No,' she said, shaking her head with certainty. 'It wouldn't have come. And if it had come at home, it would have been different.'

So she left for Bloemfontein, after her strange visit to a reformatory. And I was left too, with the resolve to be more prodigal in the task that the State, though not in so many words, had enjoined on me.

NOTES

reformatory: Institution for reforming young offenders against the law
Department: the Department of Education
estrangement: causing to become unloving or unfriendly
sign out: allow a boy from the reformatory to leave after his signing a simple bond
Richard and Dickie: 'Dickie' or 'Dick' is the nickname for 'Richard'.
meneer: sir

a waif: an abandoned or neglected child
derelict: abandoned; here it refers to the abandoned child, Ha'penny
Mosuto: an African tribe
coloured: people of mixed origin in South Africa — descendants of Europeans, East Indian slaves with an admixture of Negro blood
Guy Fawkes night: 5th November. Guy Fawkes and a few other Roman catholics were discovered in a plot to blow up the Houses of Parliament in London on the night of 4th November 1605 and were hanged on the following day. It is celebrated with fireworks and bonfires and the burning of effigies of Guy.
prodigal: generous
When you put up the cross, put he was my son: When Christians die, they are buried and a tombstone with a cross is placed over the grave. On the tombstone is recorded the name and dates of birth and death of the person. Mrs. Maarman asked that Ha'penny should be recorded as her son.

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11 Third Thoughts

E. V. LUCAS

Edward Verrall Lucas (1868-1938) is a delightful essayist. He was at one time assistant editor of the magazine 'Punch'. He also wrote a life of Charles Lamb which is standard and two pleasant anthologies, *The Open Road* and *The Friendly Town*.

In this essay he shows how our generous impulses often suffer a great change when we think over them again and again.

THIS story was told to me by a friend.

It is my destiny (said he) to buy in the dearest markets and to sell—if I succeed in selling at all—in the cheapest. Usually, indeed, having tired of a picture or decorative article, I have positively to give it away, almost to make its acceptance by another a personal favour to me. But the other day was marked by an exception to this rule so striking that I have been wondering if perhaps the luck

has not changed and I am, after all, destined to be that most enviable thing, a successful dealer.

It happened thus. In drifting about the old curiosity shops of a cathedral city I came upon a portfolio of water-colour drawings, among which was one that to my eye would have been a possible Turner, even if an earlier owner had not shared that opinion or hope and set the magic name with all its initials (so often placed in the wrong order) beneath it.

"How much is this?" I asked scornfully.

"Well," said the dealer, "if it were a genuine Turner it would be worth anything. But let's say ten shillings. You can have it for that; but I don't mind if you don't, because I'm going to London next week and should take it with me to get an opinion."

I pondered.

"Mind you, I don't guarantee it," he added.

I gave him the ten shillings.

By what incredible means I found a purchaser for the drawing at fifty pounds there is no need to tell, for the point of this narrative resides not in bargaining with collectors, but in bargaining with my own soul. The astonishing fact remains that I achieved a profit of forty-nine pounds ten shillings and was duly elated. I then began to think.

The dealer (so my thoughts ran) in that little street by the cathedral west door, he ought to participate in this. He behaved very well to me and I ought to behave well to him. It would be only fair to give him half.

Thereupon I sat down and wrote a little note saying that the potential Turner drawing, which no doubt he recollected, had turned out to be authentic, and I had great pleasure in enclosing him half of the proceeds, as I considered that the only just and decent course.

Having no stamps and the hour being late I did not post this, and went to bed.

At about 3.30 a.m. I woke widely up and, according to custom, began to review my life's errors, which are in no danger of ever suffering from loneliness. From these I reached, by way of mitigation, my recent successful piece of chaffering, and put the letter to

the dealer under both examination and cross-examination. Why (so my thoughts ran) give him half? Why be quixotic? This is no world for quixotry. It was my eye that detected the probability of the drawing, not his. He had indeed failed; did not know his own business. Why put a premium on ineptitude? No, a present of, say, ten pounds at the most would more than adequately meet the case.

Sleep still refusing to oblige me, I took a book of short stories and read one. Then I closed my eyes again, and again began to think about the dealer. Why (so my thoughts ran) send him ten pounds? It will only give him a wrong idea of his customers, none other of whom would be so fair, so sporting as I. He will expect similar letters every day and be disappointed, and then he will become embittered and go down the vale of tears a miserable creature. He looked a nice old man too; a pity, nay a crime, to injure such a nature. No, ten pounds is absurd. Five would be plenty. Ten would put him above himself.

While I was dressing the next morning I thought about the dealer again. Why should I (so my thoughts ran), directly I had for the first time in my life brought off a financial coup, spoil it by giving a large part of the profit away? Was not that flying in the face of the Goddess of Business, whoever she may be? Was it not asking her to disregard me—only a day or so after we had at last got on terms? There is no fury like a woman scorned; it would probably be the end of me. City magnates are successful probably just because they don't do these foolish impulsive things. Impulse is the negation of magnatism. If I am to make any kind of figure in this new *role* of fine-art-speculator (so my thoughts continued) I must control my feelings. No, five pounds is absurd. A *douceur* of one pound will meet the case. It will be nothing to me—or, at any rate, nothing serious—but a gift of quail and manna from a clear sky to the dealer, without, however, doing him any harm. A pound will be ample, accompanied by a brief note.

The note was to the effect that I had sold the drawing at a profit which enabled me to make him a present, because it was an old, and perhaps odd, belief of mine that one should do this kind of thing;

good luck should be shared.

I had the envelope in my pocket containing the note and the cheque when I reached the club for lunch; and that afternoon I played bridge so disastrously that I was glad I had not posted it.

After all (so my thoughts ran, as I destroyed the envelope and contents) such bargains are all part of the game. Buying and selling are a perfectly straightforward matter between dealer and customer. The dealer asks as much as he thinks he can extort, and the customer, having paid it, is under no obligation whatever to the dealer. The incident is closed.

NOTES

cathedral: the principal church of the district under a bishop's authority

curiosity shops: shops selling strange and interesting things; *Old Curiosity Shop* is the name of a novel by Charles Dickens.

portfolio: a case (usually of leather) for keeping loose papers, documents, etc.

Turner: English landscape painter

get an opinion: get a professional critic to give his view of a work of art or book (here, the painting)

potential Turner: The drawing which might be Turner's and therefore it might be possible to make money on it.

mitigation: making something less severe

chaffering: bargaining, haggling over a price

quixotic: derived from Don Quixote; here, it means extravagantly generous

put a premium on ineptitude: give a price, a bonus for foolishness

vale of tears: (Vale is poetic for valley); valley of sorrow — metaphorically this unhappy life

financial coup: a successful money deal

flying in the face of: acting in a way that shows contempt or defiance

got on terms: agreed to certain conditions; here, being favoured by the Goddess of Business

magnatism: A magnate is someone with great wealth or someone important in industry; here, the abstract noun form has been coined by Lucas for humour.

doucer: a tip, a gift or a bribe

a gift of quail and manna: Quail is a game bird and manna is the food miraculously supplied to the Israelites in the wilderness; hence an unexpected pleasing gift.

extort: get something out forcibly

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12 Happiness

F. L. LUCAS

Frank Lawrence Lucas (1894-1967) is a classical scholar, essayist, poet and critic. He was a fellow of King's College, Cambridge.

The present extract is taken from his *The Greatest Problem and Other Essays*. In "Happiness" the author explains the concept of happiness in terms of happy, fruitful, intelligent and interesting activity.

NATURE, men used fancifully to say, abhors a vacuum; but of human nature this is actually true. Even futile activity, whatever the Buddhist view, may be better, at least for western minds, than none at all. One of Napoleon's prisoners, Ouvrard, kept himself sane in solitary confinement by daily scattering on the floor of his cell a number of pins, and groping about till he had found them all again. It is the idle dog that is most pestered by his fleas. He would be far happier worrying a stick. We all need our sticks to worry, even if we realize at moments that they are merely dry sticks; though of course this wisdom fails if, instead of the dog worrying the stick, the stick begins to worry the dog. If the pure extrovert is apt to be unintelligent, the pure introvert tends to grow broody. Life does not bear too much thinking on; the best antidote is action.

Activity, however, is not only a condition of health, and an antidote to boredom and melancholia. It can be, in itself, one of the greatest positive sources of happiness. One of the problems of our modern world is that so many unfortunate beings are forced to spend their lives on work they dislike, or would dislike if they had more sense. The ancient Greek view that much mechanical labour is unworthy of free men because it wraps the body (and, they might have added, the mind) is bleak, but true. The happiest work, I think, must be creative—not in the narrow sense that we should all be painting pictures or writing odes, but in the sense that

it calls on the individual for intelligent skill exerted in his own way, if it is only growing vegetables; that it should not be the mechanical drudgery of slaves toiling at a conveyor-belt, or pouring nails down a pipe. I know an unassuming maiden lady who toils horrifying hours at coaching children in their holidays. 'But' she said to me, 'I love it.' This is partly, I dare say, maternal instinct; but partly also because she is using a free, intelligent skill, as a sculptor carving and moulding young minds.

If I were a bricklayer, I should have no initiative of my own in laying my bricks—the architect would have settled all that; but I should at least want the fun of finding how to lay bricks as fast as they can be well laid, with that economy of effort which in a work of art we call 'grace'; but my trade union would not let me, for quite understandable, yet really lamentable reasons. And I should have to stroll wearily and listlessly about my job, like all the other bricklayers that anyone may see anywhere any day. A detestable conclusion.

The bane of our time, in short, is that instead of doing work we like, and as much of it as we healthily can, and living largely on the joy of that, we do work we dislike, and as little as possible, and expect to live only in our moments of leisure, which we try our utmost to extend. And when we get that leisure many of us spend it, not on activity, but in the lame impotence of passive spectators.

The curse of labour does not lie in labour, but in the unsatisfactory kinds of it to which all except the lucky have always been, and still are, condemned—work that distorts body or mind, that is tedious, or useless, or immoderate. To be satisfactory, indeed, it is not enough that work be of a kind that can become interesting. The human mind has a useful, yet horrible capacity for growing interested, sometimes, even in the most sterile and futile subjects. The shelves of libraries groan with books and dissertations that ought to have bored their writers too insufferably ever to get written. Ideally, work should not only be interesting to the worker; it should also not make him uninteresting to his intelligent fellow-creatures. And it should be useful not only to the doer, but to

others. It is this that makes, for example, the supreme good fortune of a good doctor. Indeed it is hard for activity to seem lastingly satisfying if it serves no ends but one's own. Perhaps my happiest years were in the Second War. Those six years were laborious, anxious, often tedious; yet the need was past question; and the object of our particular efforts, we knew, was being slowly but successfully attained.

For another condition of happy activity is that it should be successful, yet not too easily successful. There should be difficulties enough to challenge brain or sinew, but difficulties that *can* be overcome; just as the happiest climate for human development is something less soft than Tahiti, less hard than Greenland. Happiness depends more on progressing and succeeding, than on being something, or possessing something. It seems likely enough that a house-maid promoted to housekeeper may feel as much satisfaction as a Foreign Secretary promoted to Prime Minister. Such things are largely relative. If the lift is going up (no matter from which floor to which)—elation; if it is going down—gloom. And so it may well be a misfortune to succeed too rapidly, or too easily. Alexander may have been beloved of the Gods in dying young—for his later life could hardly have avoided an anti-climax such that of Charles XII. And Caesar, who had a far harder climb to success, may well have got more from life.

For most men, who are neither Caesars nor Alexanders, it is none the less usually happier to rise steadily, rather than too rapidly; to succeed constantly rather than spectacularly; to advance with a steady moderation that leaves future possibilities unexhausted; so that life itself ends before the tide of success and achievement has seriously ebbed.

The essential is always to have something in hand. In Montaigne's phrase, let death take a man still planting his cabbages. No doubt it may be necessary, with increasing age, to change and lighten one's occupations. Writers have often gone on writing too long. Painters (like Hokusai), who are happier in having work more manual and less purely mental, have sometimes fared better. But a man is a limited creature if he can do nothing but write.

Let him, if he has not enough left to say, or not enough power left for saying it, find other fields. But until he comes, as we said in the First War, to 'pushing up the daisies', let him at least cultivate something or other.

No doubt, this stress on activity may strike some as febrile. There was some Indian who observed in his wisdom: 'To stand is better than to move; to sit than to stand; to lie than to sit; and to be dead than all that.' But this seems to me a dismal and detestable view of life, attributable partly to a debilitating climate. Any race that really adopted such principles would, in this aggressively competitive world, probably soon attain its wish—or its imagined wish—and become extinct indeed.

NOTES

the Buddhist view: the view that true happiness lies in renunciation of all worldly activities

Napoleon: renowned French emperor and military genius

G. J. Ouvrard: French speculator and financier

confinement: imprisonment

It is the idle dog ..... fleas: It is the idle man that suffers the most.

extrovert: person more interested in what goes on around him than in his own thoughts and feelings (opposite: introvert)

melancholia: sadness marked by depression and ill-based fears

the mechanical drudgery ... a pipe: the boredom felt by people engaged in doing monotonous work

conveyor-belt: an endlessly moving flexible belt for conveying goods from one place to another especially in a factory

unassuming: modest

maternal instinct: natural feminine tendency to care for children

bane: curse

lame impotence: crippled powerlessness; helplessness

immoderate: extreme

dissertation: a written assignment submitted as part of course of study

Tahiti: an island in the Pacific Ocean, where the climatic conditions are very pleasant and healthy

Greenland: a large island in the Arctic region

Charles XII: King of Sweden and a military genius. Denmark, Poland, and Russia united against what was regarded as a weak Sweden. But Charles XII successfully fought against Denmark and Poland and then forced the Russians to retreat into Russia. He was, however, no match for the Russian winter and his army was annihilated.

Caesar: Julius Caesar, Roman Statesman and one of the world's greatest military commanders

Montaigne: a great French essayist
Let death ..... cabbages: to die in harness or while on duty
Hokusai: well-known Japanese artist and wood-engraver
pushing up the daisies: When we say a man is 'pushing up the daisies,' we mean he is dead and buried.
febrile: feverish

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13 Three on Top

COMMANDER M. S. KOHLI

Manmohan Singh Kohli (b. 1931), a Commander in the Indian Navy, took keen interest in mountaineering and led many expeditions to Nanda Kot, Annapurna, Everest and to other peaks in the Himalayas. He is the Founder-President of the International Youth Organization. He was awarded the Arjuna Award, the Gold Medal of India Mountaineering Foundation and Ati Vishishtha Seva Medal. His books include *Nine Atop Everest*, *Last of the Annapurnas* **and** *Trek the Himalayas*.

This passage gives an account of the experience of Commander Kohli and his men when they climbed Everest.

RAWAT and Bahuguna, B. P. Singh and Ahluwalia, forming the fourth and fifth Summit parties respectively, moved up to the Advance Base Camp on May 20. In view of the short climbing period then almost coming to a close, it was decided that both these pairs should push up together and make their attempt on the 24th. But on the following day once again strong winds started blowing. The special weather forecast that evening indicated bad weather conditions on Everest from the afternoon of 24th to the afternoon of 27th. It was thus decided to send the party up on 26th for an attempt on the 29th.

A Summit party of four needed at least 25 bottles of oxygen, and we had just about this number left. In case of an accident, or an extra night at South Col or the last Camp, this quantity would

be inadequate. An all-out effort was, therefore, made to find every available bottle for this party. Out of the remnants of various expeditions around the Base Camp, one full oxygen bottle was retrieved. Of the four oxygen bottles kept at the Advance Base for medical purposes, two were released to the fourth party. It was also planned to pick up some half-filled bottles lying at the last American Camp site.

On the morning of May 25, a huge ice-avalanche from the Lhotse face swept over the unoccupied Camp III, burying the tents and equipments eight to ten feet deep, and with them the twelve precious bottles of oxygen and the chances of the last Summit party.

Ahluwalia, B. P. Singh and Bahuguna, with their support Sherpas, spent the whole day probing the avalanche. Fortunately, towards the late afternoon, they succeeded in digging out the twelve oxygen bottles. They were all intact. We were all happy to know this.

In view of the excellent work done by the Sherpas, we thought it fit to include one of the Sherpas in the Summit party. Phu Dorji, who had led the support party carrying loads to the highest camp on Everest, deserved this honour more than anyone else. Phu Dorji was at that time at the Base Camp. He was asked to reach South Col in two days and join the summit party on the 27th.

On the morning of May 26, the fourth Summit party, with their Sherpas, left for Camp IV. They were in high spirits and made Camp III in good time.

A short distance up the Lhotse face, B. P. Singh suddenly developed some heart trouble, and finding it difficult to continue, he returned to the Advance Base. The others carried on to Camp IV, and the next day to the South Col. Phu Dorji had, in the meantime, come up to the Advance Base on the 26th and reached South Col on the following day.

On the morning of May 28, Ahluwalia and Phu Dorji on one rope, Rawat and Bahuguna on the other, moved up to the last Camp.

The party carried an extra Indian light-weight tent and two sets of sleeping-bags and air-mattresses. Ahluwalia did some cine photography on the way.

They moved fast and were soon at the 1962 Indian Camp site. They had a short rest and some coffee. Phu Dorji bagged an extra bottle from the American Summit Camp, and soon they were at the last Camp.

With the help of Sherpas they levelled a place for another tent. Walkie-Talkie contact was established in the afternoon. They were informed that the weather was likely to get worse in the afternoon of May 29, and they were advised to leave early next morning.

The next morning was clear though not calm. They were all up around 3 a.m. melting snow and preparing liquids. By 5.30 a.m. they were on their way. Unfortunately, Bahuguna had developed an itch all over his body and had to spend a miserable night. He now discovered that he was unable to go as fast as Rawat. Feeling that Rawat's chances might also be spoiled, he untied himself from the rope and asked Rawat to carry on. Bahuguna descended to South Col and the same day to Camp IV.

Rawat, however, continued for a while, alone. It was perhaps for the first time in the history of Everest that a climber was braving it up all by himself at a height of about 28,000 feet.

The wind was blowing at 60 to 70 kilometres per hour. Rawat continued undaunted mustering up all his courage. Strong gusts of wind almost swept him off his feet and at times he was getting worried. But he kept up the struggle.

Rawat was also carrying with him a Walkie-Talkie set in the hope that he would be able to talk from the Summit to the camps below. He took out the set and tried to contact the lower camps but without success. He decided to discard the set and continued his march, walking as fast as he could to catch up with Ahluwalia and Phu Dorji. According to Rawat, "Slowly I continued between rock and snow, taking to rock when it was necessary and kicking the edge of the snow, when there was no proper foot-hold on the rock. Often I had to cut the ice above with my axe before I could find a place to hook my fingers. I had gone about half a furlong on the rock when I had some trouble with my oxygen supply. I was breathless. I did not know what to do, I kept shaking my head and hands but it did not help. I wanted to take off my rucksack and

check the oxygen gear but there was no place to keep the rucksack. The slope was steep, both my feet were in the snow along the rock and I was standing there maintaining my balance with some difficulty. I realised slowly that about 25 to 30 steps below, towards the right, was a big flat slab where I could take off my rucksack. Even going down a few steps made me feel exhausted and dizzy. With great difficulty, I found the place where I could put down my rucksack. By then I was in real agony, but I managed somehow to get the oxygen to work again."

Ahluwalia and Phu Dorji were continuing their climb to the Summit. When they were just below the South Summit, having a short rest, Phu Dorji jerked his hand and pointed towards the rocky portion of the sharp ridge. They saw a lone figure moving up. In that wilderness of silent snow and lonely rocks a figure appearing out of nowhere made their hair stand up. Both Ahluwalia and Phu Dorji did not know what it could be and they were frightened. Phu Dorji started reciting prayers in his Sherpa language. Seeing the lone figure, Ahluwalia was reminded of Hermann Buhl's solo attempt on Nanga Parbat. This man was taking every step after thorough investigation and great care. He was undoubtedly aware of the fact that the slightest slip on his part would send him on a rolling down journey to Tibet. Ahluwalia and Phu Dorji waited for half an hour for the lone climber to come up to them. When he arrived at last, they were relieved and happy to find that it was Rawat. There was not much time left for talking, so they continued their ascent. They did not go right up to the top of the South Summit but went left about 70 feet below the top and took a traverse till they came across a place which seemed to have been well used, for a lot of discarded empty oxygen bottles were lying there. That place they termed as 'India's Den'. There they dumped their partially used oxygen bottles as well as their juice bottles.

It was 9 a.m. when they left 'India's Den', with an oxygen flow of two litres per minute and felt much lighter after discarding their empty and partly used bottles of oxygen. Now they continued at a fair speed. The winds had abated, coming down to a speed of 60 to 65 kilometres per hour. The Summiters found some foot-prints

of the third Summit party. At the last curve Phu Dorji got excited and started shouting, "Sahib, Sahib". Ahluwalia and Rawat quickly took the curve to see. There in front of them was a dome of snow with the Indian National flag fluttering in the gentle wind. The edges of the flag were already in shreds. All the three were full of joy, wonder and excitement. There was a great sense of relief. Rawat was praying silently, his lips were moving and he was saying "Hari Om, Hari Om".

Arm in arm they stepped on the Summit together at 10.15 a.m. For the first time, three mountaineers stood together on top of Everest.

Ahluwalia had tears in his eyes: tears of joy and gratitude. Rawat thought of his wife, children and parents and the pride that they would take in his success. All three of them carried out the Summit rituals, according to their religious faiths. Rawat took out an idol of Devi Durga, burned incense and offered prayers. Phu Dorji took out a silver locket which had a miniature photograph of the Dalai Lama and tied it to the American flag-pole. Ahluwalia left a photograph of Guru Nanak. He also tied his wrist-watch to the American flag-pole as his personal offering.

According to Ahluwalia, "We found a number of other objects left by the other Summiters. To my surprise I found a pile of chocolate slabs under the Indian flag-pole. None of the Summiters had ever mentioned leaving chocolates on the Summit. Leaving two slabs of chocolates there I picked up four and kept them in my pocket. That, of course, I did with the leave of 'Goddess Mother of the Winds'. I took photographs of the peaks all around—Makalu, Lhotse and Nuptse. At a distance Kangchenjunga looked gorgeous. My movie camera did not work on the Summit. To put a new film in the still camera, I got down about six feet from the Summit, and removed my down-gloves. When I tried to put the end of the film in the slot of the empty spool, it would not go in. As I would rotate the empty spool, the film would crack and break. Therefore, I rolled about one third of the film loosely on an empty spool and then, closing the camera tightened it carefully and slowly. It worked. But my fingers were frozen. Phu Dorji served a hot cup of coffee which was

most welcome. It was quite a novel experience to have coffee on the Summit of Everest! Everything we did looked novel and thrilled us."

It was 10.45 a.m. when Phu Dorji, Rawat and Ahluwalia, in that order, left the Summit. As they were leaving, they thought of Tenzing and Hillary, specially as it was the 29th of May, the same day on which exactly twelve years earlier the Summit of Everest had been scaled for the first time.

At 3.30 p.m. they were at the last Camp, all three in good health. After half an hour's rest they started for South Col, reaching there at 6.15 p.m. Pemba Sunder received them at South Col, and they spent a comfortable night. They were very tired and slept well.

Ahluwalia collected all the available oxygen bottles, some containing oxygen hardly to last for 15 minutes. He kept on changing from one bottle to another, and the next morning there was a heap of at least 20 bottles lying about the tent, all used up during the night. Next day they were down at the Advance Base, and on the following day at the Base.

On May 31, all of us were at last down at the Base. There were celebrations throughout the night, and on the following day, we left contented and thankful to Providence for all the wonderful luck we had.

NOTES

ice-avalanche: a large mass of ice detached from a mountain slope and sliding suddenly downward

Walkie-Talkie: two-way radio (transmitter and receiver) light enough for one man to carry

furlong: a unit of measuring distance (eight furlongs make a mile)

rucksack: a canvas bag fastened on the back, carried by people travelling on foot

took a traverse: took a sideway course

in shreds: badly torn

with the leave of: with the permission of

down-gloves: gloves lined with soft feathers of birds

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14 The Harmonic Life of Plants

PETER TOMPKINS AND CHRISTOPHER BIRD

Peter Tompkins (b. 1919) was educated in England, France, Italy, Switzerland and America. He worked for U. S. Intelligence in World War II. Since then he has turned his inquiring, analytical mind to unravelling the secrets of nature. He has written about plants and the Great Pyramids.

Christopher Bird (b. 1928) went to Harvard and also learned Russian by living with a family of Russians in Boston. He is a biologist and an anthropologist. He too worked for U. S. Intelligence.

The following is a chapter from the authors' popular book *The Secret Life of Plants*. Here, the authors present an account of the effect of musical notes on plants.

IT is said that Lord Krishna, the eighth and principal avatar and incarnation of Vishnu—a member, together with Siva and Brahma, of the Hindu deical trinity—used music to promote enthralling growth and bewitching verdure in the Kunjavan of Vrindavan, a city long famous for its saint-musicians. Much later Mian Tan Sen, one of the sages of the court of the famous Moghul emperor, Akbar, was reported to be able to perform such miracles with his songs as to bring on rain or light oil lamps and to vernalize plants and induce them to blossom simply by intoning devotional songs or *ragas* at them. This appealing idea is confirmed in Tamil literature which refers to the eyes, or buds, of sugar-cane growing vigorously in response to the mellifluous buzzing of speckled beetles and to the profuse oozing of sugary nectar from the golden flowers of *Cassia fistula* when serenaded with heart-melting melodies.

All this was familiar to a scholar of ancient Indian history and philosophy, Dr. T. C. Singh, who was also head of the Department of Botany at Annamalai University, south of Madras. He was interested enough in these old legends to want to make some experiments of his own. From studying the live streaming of protoplasm in the cells of an aquatic plant, *Hydrilla verticillata*, he went on to

experiment with an electrically operated tuning fork placed six feet away from the plant. Through a microscope he observed that the fork's note, broadcast for half an hour just before six o'clock in the morning, caused the protoplasm to stream at a speed normally attained only much later, after sunrise. The same acceleration was achieved when a violin was played near the plants, and after a fortnight they were noticeably taller and stronger than the control plants.

Encouraged by this, Singh asked Gouri Kumari, a lecturer at Annamalai's Music College, to play a *raga* to some balsam plants. Kumari, a virtuoso, played for twenty-five minutes each day, on a lutelike instrument with seven strings, the *vina*. During the fifth week, the experimental balsams began to shoot ahead of their unserenaded neighbours and, at the end of December, had produced an average of 72 per cent more leaves than the control plants, and had grown 20 per cent higher.

Singh then experimented on a vast number of flowers, such as common asters, petunias, and white spider lilies, along with such economic plants as onions, sesame, radishes, sweet potatoes, and tapioca. Each was entertained for several weeks just before sunrise with more than half a dozen separate *ragas*. The music lasted a half hour daily, scaled at a high pitch, with frequencies between one hundred and six hundred cycles per second. From all this experimentation Singh was able to state, in the magazine of the Bihar Agricultural College at Sabour, that he had "proven beyond any shadow of doubt that harmonic sound waves affect the growth, flowering, fruiting, and seed-yields of plants."

As a result of his success, Singh began wondering whether sound could spur field crops to greater yields. From 1960 to 1963 he piped the *Charukesi raga* via a loudspeaker to six varieties of early, medium, and late rice growing in the paddies of seven villages, and got harvests ranging consistently from 25 to 60 per cent higher than the regional average. He also was able musically to provoke peanuts and chewing tobacco into producing nearly 50 per cent more than normal.

Replying to a question which he thought would "naturally

bristle up" in the minds of his readers, as to exactly what caused the effect on plants, Singh explained that in his laboratories he could visually demonstrate that "the stimulated plants are energized to synthesize greater quantities of food during a given period of time, which naturally leads to greater yields." Singh also reported that his method of musical stimulation has even increased the chromosome count of certain species of water plants, as well as the nicotine content of tobacco leaves.

Though the Indians appear to have been the first to affect plants with music or sound, they are by no means the only ones.

An interesting and eventually very controversial series of similar experiments was begun in 1968 by Dorothy Retallack of Denver, Colorado, who had enrolled for a degree for which she was required to come up with a laboratory experiment in biology. She vaguely recalled reading an article about a farmer playing disc jockey to his cornfields, and decided to follow his lead.

Mrs. Retallack teamed with a fellow student, whose family provided an empty room at home and furnished two groups of plants, which included philodendron, corn, radishes, geraniums, and African violets. Together they suspended Gro-Lux lights over one group and played the taped musical notes B and D struck on the piano every second, alternating five minutes of those wearisomely repetitive sounds with five minutes of silence. The tape played continuously twelve hours a day.

During the first week, the African violets, drooping at the start of the experiment, revived and began to flower. For ten days all the plants in the sound group seemed to thrive; but by the end of the third week all the plants, some of which had been actually leaning away from the source of the sound as if blown by a strong wind, had died—with the unaccountable exception of the African violets, which somehow remained unaffected. The control group, allowed to grow in peace, flourished.

When she reported these results to her biology professor, Francis F. Broman, and asked if she could do a more elaborately controlled experiment, he reluctantly consented. "The idea made me groan a little," said Broman afterwards, "but it was novel."

Professor Broman made available to Dorothy Retallack three new environmental chambers, fifty-six inches long, twenty-six inches high, and eighteen inches deep, similar in shape to large fish aquariums, and which allowed for precise control of light, temperature, and humidity.

Allotting one chamber for a control group, Mrs. Retallack used the same plants, with the exception of the violets, as in the first experiment, setting them in identical soil and affording them equal amounts of water on schedule. Trying to pinpoint the musical note most conducive to survival, each day she tried an F note, played unremittingly for eight hours in one chamber and three hours intermittently in another. In the first chamber her plants were dead within two weeks. In the second chamber, the plants were much healthier than the controls left in silence.

Mrs. Retallack and Profesor Broman were non-plussed by these results; they could not help wondering whether the plants had succumbed to fatigue or boredom or had simply been "driven out of their minds." The clearcut experiments aroused a spate of controversy in the biology department, with both students and professors either scoffing or intrigued.

Two students, following Mrs. Retallack's lead, ran an eight-week experiment on summer squashes, broadcasting music from two radio stations into their chambers, one specializing in hard rock, the other in classical music.

The squashes exposed to Haydn, Beethoven, Brahms, Schubert, grew *towards* the transistor radio, one of them even twining itself lovingly around it. The other squashes grew from the rock broadcasts and even tried to climb the slippery walls of their glass cage. Further experiments in which Mrs. Retallack submitted her plants to "acid rock" music, a percussive type of music that subordinates harmony to volume and tempo, revealed that all plants leaned away from this cacophony. Mrs. Retallack rotated all the pots 180 degrees, only to see the plants lean in the opposite direction. This convinced the majority of critics that the plants were definitely reacting to the music.

Jazz caused her a real surprise. When her plants heard Duke

Ellington and Louis Armstrong, 55 per cent of the plants leaned fifteen to twenty degrees *towards* the speaker, and growth was more abundant than in the silent chamber. Mrs. Retallack also determined that different musical styles, markedly affected the evaporation rate of distilled water inside the chambers. From full beakers, fourteen to seventeen millilitres evaporated over a given time period in the silent chambers, twenty to twenty-five millilitres vaporized under the influence of Bach, Shankar, and jazz; but, with rock, the disappearance was fifty-five to fifty-nine millilitres.

The publicity given to Mrs. Retallack's experiments in newspapers and on television produced an avalanche of mail. There was also much hostile criticism and questioning of her conclusions. Professional biologists pooh-poohed this "pseudo-science" and called it "pure garbage". They felt they had been ridiculed.

Meanwhile, Mrs. Retallack had been thinking along another line. The alarming effect which acid rock music had been shown to have on plants made her wonder whether the nationwide craze for it among the younger generation might not be extremely deleterious to their development, especially when she read an article stating that two doctors had reported to the California Medical Association that of forty-three musicians playing amplified hard-rock music forty-one had suffered permanent hearing loss.

Some of Denver's rock buffs also seemed deeply impressed by Mrs. Retallack's experiments. One long-haired musician, peering into the rock-suffused biotronic chamber, said to her: "If rock is doing *that* to plants, man, I wonder what it's doing to me?"

NOTES

verdure: fresh green colour of growing plants
vernalize: hasten the flowering of plants
speckled beetles: insects marked with coloured spots
Cassia fistula: botanical name of a plant
serenade (n): a piece of music played or sung at night out of doors — especially by a lover beneath his beloved's window. Here the plants were treated to music pieces.
Hydrilla Verticillata: botanical name of a water plant
virtuoso: a skilled artist (here, a musician)
scale: arrange a tune in order of pitch

frequency: vibrations per second
Charukesi Raga: a raga played in the morning hours
disc jockey: a person who presents a radio programme of recorded music
Gro-Lux lights: Gro-Lux—a trade name; the light is used to grow plants indoors
summer squash: a fruit belonging to the cucumber family
rock (music): a kind of music with strong rhythm
Haydn, Schubert: famous composers of western music
cacophony: non-harmonic or disorganised sound — unpleasant noise
jazz: popular American dance music
Duke Ellington: U. S. Jazz pianist, composer and conductor
Louis Armstrong: U. S. trumpeter — 'king' of the New Orleans Jazz style
Shankar: Ravi Shankar — famous Indian sitarist and composer
pooh-pooh: treat with contempt
deleterious: harmful
rock buff: an enthusiast of rock music
biotronic chamber: a test chamber for studying the effect of variation in environment on living organisms

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15 The Portrait of a Lady

KHUSHWANT SINGH

Sardar Khushwant Singh (b. 1915), a barrister-at-law, is a novelist, short story writer and a journalist. Besides his two famous novels, *Train to Pakistan* and *I Shall not Hear the Nightingales*, he has published several volumes of short stories.

'A Portrait of a Lady' is a character sketch of an old lady; it could be his own grandmother. She is stiff in her religious attitude. She seems to have attained a communion with nature through her prayers and piety. The mute mourning of the sparrows at the end is suggestive of this communion.

MY grandmother, like everybody's grandmother, was an old woman.

She had been old and wrinkled for the twenty years that I had known her. People said that she had once been young and pretty and had even had a husband, but that was hard to believe. My

grandfather's portrait hung above the mantelpiece in the drawing-room. He wore a big turban and loose-fitting clothes. His long white beard covered the best part of his chest and he looked at least a hundred years old. He did not look the sort of person who would have a wife or children. He looked as if he could only have lots and lots of grandchildren. As for my grandmother being young and pretty, the thought was almost revolting. She often told us of the games she used to play as a child. That seemed quite absurd and undignified on her part and we treated it like the fables of the Prophets she used to tell us.

She had always been short and fat and slightly bent. Her face was a criss-cross of wrinkles running from everywhere to everywhere. No, we were certain she had always been as we had known her. Old, so terribly old that she could not have grown older, and had stayed at the same age for twenty years. She could never have been pretty; but she was always beautiful. She hobbled about the house in spotless white with one hand resting on her waist to balance her stoop and the other telling the beads of her rosary. Her silver locks were scattered untidily over her pale, puckered face, and her lips constantly moved in inaudible prayer. Yes, she was beautiful. She was like the winter landscape in the mountains, an expanse of pure white serenity breathing peace and contentment.

My grandmother and I were good friends. My parents left me with her when they went to live in the city and we were constantly together. She used to wake me up in the morning and get me ready for school. She said her morning prayer in a monotonous sing-song while she bathed and dressed me in the hope that I would listen and get to know it by heart. I listened because I loved her voice but never bothered to learn it. Then she would fetch my wooden slate which she had already washed and plastered with yellow chalk, a tiny earthen ink pot and a reed pen, tie them all in a bundle and hand it to me. After a breakfast of a thick, stale chapatti with a little butter and sugar spread on it, we went to school. She carried several stale chapatties with her for the village dogs.

My grandmother always went to school with me because the

school was attached to the temple. The priest taught us the alphabet and the morning prayer. While the children sat in rows on either side of the verandah singing the alphabet or the prayer in a chorus, my grandmother sat inside reading the scriptures. When we had both finished, we would walk back together. This time the village dogs would meet us at the temple door. They followed us to our home growling and fighting with each other for the chapatties we threw to them.

When my parents were comfortably settled in the city, they sent for us. That was a turning-point in our friendship. Although we shared the same room, my grandmother no longer came to school with me. I used to go to an English school in a motor bus. There were no dogs in the streets and she took to feeding sparrows in the courtyard of our city house.

As the years rolled by we saw less of each other. For sometime she continued to wake me up and get me ready for school. When I came back she would ask me what the teacher had taught me. I would tell her English words and little things of western cience and learning, the law of gravity, Archimedes' principle, the world being round, etc. This made her unhappy. She could not help me with my lessons. She did not believe in the things they taught at the English school and was distressed that there was no teaching about God and the scriptures. One day I announced that we were being given music lessons. She was very disturbed. To her music had lewd associations. It was the monopoly of harlots and beggars and not meant for gentlefolk. She said nothing but her silence meant disapproval. She rarely talked to me after that.

When I went up to University, I was given a room of my own. The common link of friendship was snapped. My grandmother accepted her seclusion with resignation. She rarely left her spinning wheel to talk to anyone. From sunrise to sunset she sat by her wheel spinning and reciting prayers. Only in the afternoon she relaxed for a while to feed the sparrows. While she sat in the verandah breaking the bread into little bits, hundreds of little birds collected round her creating a veritable bedlam of chirrupings. Some came and perched on her legs, others on her shoulders. Some even

sat on her head. She smiled but never shoo'd them away. It used to be the happiest half-hour of the day for her.

When I decided to go abroad for further studies, I was sure my grandmother would be upset. I would be away for five years, and at her age one could never tell. But my grandmother could. She was not even sentimental. She came to leave me at the railway station but did not talk or show any emotion. Her lips moved in prayer, her mind was lost in prayer. Her fingers were busy telling the beads of her rosary. Silently she kissed my forehead, and when I left I cherished the moist imprint as perhaps the last sign of physical contact between us.

But that was not so. After five years I came back home and was met by her at the station. She did not look a day older. She still had no time for words, and while she clasped me in her arms I could hear her reciting her prayer. Even on the first day of my arrival, her happiest moments were with her sparrows whom she fed longer and with frivolous rebukes.

In the evening a change came over her. She did not pray. She collected the women of the neighbourhood, got an old drum and started to sing. For several hours she thumped the sagging skins of the dilapidated drum and sang of the home-coming of warriors. We had to persuade her to stop to avoid overstraining. That was the first time since I had known her that she did not pray.

The next morning she was taken ill. It was a mild fever and the doctor told us that it would go. But my grandmother thought differently. She told us that her end was near. She said that, since only a few hours before the close of the last chapter of her life she had omitted to pray, she was not going to waste any more time talking to us.

We protested. But she ignored our protests. She lay peacefully in bed praying and telling her beads. Even before we could suspect, her lips stopped moving and the rosary fell from her lifeless fingers. A peaceful pallor spread on her face and we knew that she was dead.

We lifted her off the bed and, as is customary, laid her on the ground and convered her with a red shroud. After a few hours of

mourning we left her alone to make arrangements for her funeral.

In the evening we went to her room with a crude stretcher to take her to be cremated. The sun was setting and had lit her room and verandah with a blaze of golden light. We stopped half-way in the courtyard. All over the verandah and in her room right up to where she lay dead and stiff wrapped in the red shroud, thousands of sparrows sat scattered on the floor. There was no chirruping. We felt sorry for the birds and my mother fetched some bread for them. She broke it into little crumbs, the way my grandmother used to, and threw it to them. The sparrows took no notice of the bread. When we carried my grandmother's corpse off, they flew away quietly. Next morning the sweeper swept the bread crumbs into the dust bin.

NOTES

mantelpiece: ornamental shelf above a fire-place

Prophets: persons who teach religion and claim that their teachings come to them directly from God; here, the Sikh Gurus

criss-cross: here, the pattern of crossed lines or wrinkles on the old lady's face

telling the beads of her rosary: counting the beads of a rosary, a string of beads for keeping count of prayers

puckered: wrinkled

lewd: indecent

harlot: old word for 'prostitute'

veritable: real, genuine

bedlam: a noisy scene or a scene of uproar (as in a madhouse)

chirrupings: a series of short sharp sounds. Here, the chattering of sparrows. (a **veritable bedlam of chirrupings** has been used to mean 'a lot of noise made by the sparrows'.)

frivolous rebukes: light, playful scolding

sang of the home-coming: The collective singing of women accompanied by drums to celebrate a happy event is a custom prevalent in many parts of North India, particularly in Punjab. Here, the old lady was celebrating her grandson's return from abroad.

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16 My Boyhood Days

RABINDRANATH TAGORE

Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941) is a great poet, novelist, playwright, short story writer and a talented painter. His writings gained world wide recognition. His works were first written in Bengali and later translated into English. He was the first Indian to be awarded the Nobel Prize in 1913.

He was an eminent educationist as well. The experimental school, 'Shanti Niketan' which he started grew into a world University — 'Vishwa Bharati'.

This passage is taken from his book *My Boyhood Days*. It gives us a good account of Calcutta and acquaints us with the life and customs of people, during his boyhood days.

THE clouds have had no rest since yesterday evening. The rain is pouring incessantly. The trees stand huddled together in a seemingly foolish manner; the birds are silent. I call to mind the evenings of my boyhood.

We used then to spend our evening in the servants' quarters. At that time English spellings and meanings did not yet lie like a nightmare on my shoulders. My third brother used to say that I ought first to get a good foundation of Bengali and only afterwards to go on to the English superstructure. Consequently, while other school-boys of my age were glibly reciting 'I am up', 'He is down', I had not even started on B, A, D, bad and M, A, D, mad.

In the speech of the nabobs the servants' quarters were then called 'tosha-khana'. Even though our house had fallen far below its former aristocratic state, these old high-sounding names, 'tosha-khana', 'daftar-khana', 'baithak-khana', still clung to it.

On the southern side of this 'tosha-khana', a castor oil lamp burned dimly on a glass stand in a big room; on the wall was a picture of Ganesh and a crude country painting of the goddess Kali, round which the wall lizards hunted their insect prey. There was no furniture in the room, merely a soiled mat spread on the floor.

You must understand that we lived like poor people, and were consequently saved the trouble of keeping a good stable. Away in a corner outside, in a thatched shed under a tamarind tree, was a shabby carriage and an old horse. We wore the very simplest and plainest clothes, and it was a long time before we even began to wear socks. It was luxury beyond our wildest dreams when our tiffin rations went beyond Brajeswar's inventory and included a loaf of bread, and butter wrapped in a banana leaf. We adapted ourselves easily to the broken wrecks of our former glory.

Brajeswar was the name of the servant who presided over our mat seat. His hair and beard were grizzled, the skin of his face dry and tightdrawn; he was a man of serious disposition, harsh voice, and deliberately mouthed speech. His former master had been a prosperous and well-known man, yet necessity had degraded him from that service to the work of looking after neglected children like us. I have heard that he used to be a master in a village school To the end of his life he kept this school-masterly language and prim manner. Instead of saying 'The gentlemen are waiting', he would say, 'They await you', and his masters smiled when they heard him. He was as finicky about caste matters as he was conceited. When bathing he would go down into the tank and push back the oily surface water five or six times with his hands before taking a plunge. When he came out of the tank after his bath Brajeswar would edge his way through the garden in so gingerly a way that one would think he could only keep caste by avoiding all contact with this unclean world that God has made. He would talk very emphatically about what was right and what was wrong in manners and behaviour. And besides, he held his head a little on one side, which made his words all the more impressive.

II

When I was a little boy Calcutta city was not so wakeful at night as it is now. Nowadays, as soon as the day of sunlight is over, the day of electric light begins. There is not much work done in it, but there is no rest, for the fire continues, as it were, to smoulder in the charcoal after the blazing wood has burnt itself out. The

oil mills are still, the steamer sirens are silent, the labourers have left the factories, the buffaloes which pull the carts of jute bales are stabled in the tin-roofed sheds. But the nerves of the city are throbbing still with the fever of thought which has burned all day in her brain. Buying and selling go on as by day in the shops that line the streets, though the fire is a little choked with ash. Motors continue to run in all directions, emitting all kinds of raucous grunts and groans, though they no longer run with the zest of the morning. But in those old times which we knew, when the day was over whatever business remained undone wrapped itself up in the black blanket of the night and went to sleep in the darkened ground-floor premises of the city. Outside the house the evening sky rose quiet and mysterious. It was so still that we could hear, even in our own street, the shouts of the grooms from the carriages of those people of fashion who were returning from taking the air in Eden Gardens by the side of the Ganges.

In the hot season of *Chaitra* and *Vaishakh* the hawkers would go about the streets shouting 'I-i-i-ce'. In a big pot full of lumps of ice and salt water were little tin containers of what we called 'kulpi' ice—nowadays ousted by the more fashionable ices or 'ice-cream'. No one but myself knows how my mind thrilled to that cry as I stood on the verandah facing the street. Then there was another cry '*Bela* flowers'. Nowadays for some reason one hears little of the gardener's baskets of spring flowers—I do not know why. But in those days the air was full of the scent of the thickly strung *bela* flowers which the women and girls wore in their hair-knots. Before they went to bathe the women would sit outside their rooms with a hand-mirror set up before them, and dress their hair. The knot would be skilfully bound with the black hair-braid into all sorts of different styles. They wore black-bordered Chandernagore saries, skilfully crinkled before use by pleating and twisting after the fashion of those days. The barber's wife would come to scrub their feet with pumice and paint them with red lac. She and her like were the gossipmongers of the women's courts.

The crowds returning from office or from college did not then, as they do now, rush to the football fields, clinging in swarms to

the foot-boards of the trams. Nor did they crowd in front of cinema halls as they returned. There was some active interest shown in drama, but alas! I was only a child then.

Children of those times got no share in the pleasures of the grown-ups, even from a distance. If we were bold enough to go near, we would be told, 'Off with you, go and play.' But if we boys made the amount of noise appropriate for proper play, it would then be, 'Be quiet, do.' Not that the grown-ups themselves conducted their pleasures and conversation in silence, by any means; and now and again we would stand on the fringe of their far-flung jubilations, as though sprinkled by the spray of a waterfall. We would hang over the verandah on our side of the courtyard, staring across at the brilliantly lit reception-room on the other side. Big coaches would roll up to the portico one after another. Some of our elder brothers conducted the guests upstairs from the front door, sprinkling them with rose-water from the sprinkler, and giving each one a small buttonhole or nosegay of flowers. As the dramatic entertainment proceeded, we could hear the sobs of the 'highcaste *kulin* heroine', but we could make out nothing of their meaning, and our longing to know grew intense. We discovered later that though the sobber was certainly highcaste, 'she' was merely our own brother-in-law. But in those days grown-ups and children were kept apart as strictly as men and women with their separate apartments. The singing and dancing would go on in the blaze of the drawing-room chandeliers, the men would pull at the hookah, the women of the family would take their betel boxes and sit in the subdued light behind their screen, visiting ladies would gather in these retired nooks, and there would be much whispering of intimate domestic gossip. But we children were in bed by this time, and lay listening as our maid-servants Piyari or Sankari told us stories—'In the moonlight, expanding like an opening flower....'

NOTES

Part I

like a nightmare: like a bad frightening dream

superstructure: structure built on top of something else; here, Tagore is advised to learn English after learning his mother tongue

grizzled: grey
mouthed speech: a speech in which every word is said overdistinctly and rather prompously
finicky: too particular or fussy
in a gingerly way: with great care, cautiously
Part II
raucous grunts and groans: harsh noises
grooms: servants in charge of horses (groom: syce)
pumice: a kind of stone having pores used for cleaning the body
off with you!: go away!
chandelier: a lighting fixture hanging from a ceiling with branches for several candles
nook: corner

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17 On Keyhole Morals

A. G. GARDINER

Alfred George Gardiner (1865-1946) wrote under the pen name 'Alpha of the Plough'. He was an essayist and journalist on the staff of the 'News Chronicle'. He is delightful to read. His well known publications are *Prophets, Priests and Kings, Pillars of Society, Pebbles on the Shore, Leaves in the Wind* and *Windfalls*.

'On Keyhole Morals' is a fine example of the modern essay which has become so popular since the turn of the century. The language is simple and conversational. The illustrations are apt and convincing. The theme of the essay is that we put on our company manners when we go out but we are not to be judged by what we do in the open.

MY neighbour at the breakfast table complained that he had had a bad night. What with the gale and the crash of the seas, and the creaking of the timbers of the ship and the pair in the next cabin —especially the pair in the next cabin.... How they talked! It was two o'clock before they sank into silence. And such revelations! He couldn't help overhearing them. He was alone in his cabin, and what was he to do? He couldn't talk to himself to let

them know they were being overheard. And he didn't sing. And he hadn't a cough. And, in short, there was nothing for it but to overhear. And the things he heard—well.... And with a gesture of head, hands, and eyebrows he left it to me to imagine the worst. I suggested that he might cure the trouble by telling the steward to give the couple a hint that the next cabin was occupied. He received the idea as a possible way out of a painful and delicate situation. Strange, he said, it had not occurred to him.

Whether he adopted it I do not know. If I did I should know a very important thing about him. It would give me the clue to the whole man. It would tell me whether he was a willing or an unwilling eavesdropper, and there are few more searching tests of character than this. We are not to be catalogued by what we do in the open. We are all of us proper enough when we walk abroad and play our part in society. It is not our public bearing which reveals the sort of fellows we are. It only indicates the kind of fellows we desire the world to take us to be. We want the world's good opinion, and when we go out we put on our company manners as we put on our best clothes in order to win it. No one would put his ear to a keyhole if he thought an eye might be at the keyhole behind him watching him in the act. The true estimate of your character (and mine) depends on what we should do if we knew there was no keyhole behind us. It depends, not on whether you are chivalrous to someone else's wife in public, but whether you are chivalrous to your own wife in private. The eminent judge who, checking himself in a torrent of abuse of his partner at whist, contritely observed, 'I beg your pardon, madam; I thought you were my wife,' did not improve matters. He only lifted the curtain of a rather shabby private cabin. He whitewashed himself publicly out of his dirty private pail.

Or, to take another sounding, what happens when you find yourself in the quiet and undisturbed presence of other people's open letters? Perhaps you have accidentally put on your son's jacket and discovered the pockets bulging with letters. Your curiosity is excited: your parental concern is awakened. It is not unnatural to be interested in your own son. It is natural and proper. You

can summon up a score of convincing and weighty reasons why you should dip into those letters. You know that all those respectable reasons would become disreputable if you heard young John's step approaching. You know that this very reasonable display of paternal interest would suddenly become a mean act of prying of which you would be ashamed to be thought capable. But young John is miles off—perhaps down in the city, perhaps far away in the country. You are left alone with his letters and your own sense of decency. You can read the letters in perfect safety. If there are secrets in them you can share them. Not a soul will ever find you out. You may be entitled to know those secrets, and young John may be benefited by your knowing them. What do you do in these circumstances? The answer will provide you with a fairly reliable tape measure for your own spiritual contents.

There is no discredit in being curious about the people in the next cabin. We are all curious about our neighbours. In his fable of *Le Diable Boiteux,* Le Sage tells how the devil transported him from one house to another, lifted the roof, and showed what was going on inside, with very surprising and entertaining results. If the devil, in the guise of a very civil gentleman, paid me a call this evening, and offered to do the same for me, offered to spirit me over Hampstead and lift with magic and inaudible touch any roof I fancied, and show me the mysteries and privacies of my neighbours' lives, I hope I should have the decency to thank him and send him away. The amusement would be purchased at too high a price. It might not do my neighbours any harm, but it would do me a lot of harm. For, after all, the important thing is not that we should be able, like the honest blacksmith, to look the whole world in the face, but that we should be able to look ourselves in the face. And it is our private standard of conduct and not our public standard of conduct which gives or denies us that privilege. We are merely counterfeit coin if our respect for the Eleventh Commandment only applied to being found out by other people. It is being found out by ourselves that ought to hurt us.

It is the private cabin side of us that really matters. I could pass a tolerably good examination on my public behaviour. I have

never committed a murder, or a burglary. I have never picked a pocket, or forged a cheque. But these things are not evidence of good character. They may only mean that I never had enough honest indignation to commit a murder, nor enough courage to break into a house. They may only mean that I never needed to forge a cheque or pick a pocket. They may only mean that I am afraid of the police. Respect for the law is a testimonial that will not go far in the Valley of Jehosophat. The question that will be asked of me there is not whether I picked my neighbour's lock, but whether I put my ear to his keyhole; not whether I pocketed the bank note he had left on his desk, but whether I read his letters when his back was turned—in short, not whether I had respect for the law, but whether I had respect for myself and the sanctities that are outside the vulgar sphere of the law. It is what went on in my private cabin which will probably be my undoing.

NOTES

gale: strong wind
steward: a servant who attends to the needs of passengers aboard a ship or airliner
eavesdropper: a person who listens secretly to private conversation
whist: a game of cards for two pairs of players
sounding: exploratory sample
Le Sage: a French novelist
to spirit: to take away rapidly, secretly, or mysteriously
Hampstead: a suburb of London associated with many men of letters
honest blacksmith: refers to the character in Henry Longfellow's poem, 'The Village Blacksmith', who — "... looks the whole world in the face,/For he owes not any man."
the Eleventh Commadment: The Ten Commandments are the laws given by God to Moses (the Bible). Here, the author humorously adds one more commandment.
the Valley of Jehosophat: where God will judge the enemies of His people (Joel iii, 2, from the Bible)
vulgar: common

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18 Taxation

This passage has been taken from *A Preparatory General English Course* prepared by the Central Institute of English and Foreign Languages, Hyderabad.

After explaining briefly why we are taxed, the passage gives an account of some kind of taxes that we have and then describes the methods of taxation. It gives a brief and clear description of taxation and the social benefits derived from it. The language of the passage is simple.

IN order to provide a nation with an adequate supply of such social necessities as roads, hospitals and schools, a government must have a permanent source of income. It gets its essential income by the device of taxation, that is to say, it exacts compulsory contributions from the population in order to give them back in the form of social benefits. Naturally, if the government wishes to devote more money to the development of such facilities, it must increase its income and the only way to do this is by devising further means of taxation.

The kind of taxes which a country decides to impose will be determined by what it is trying to achieve. It may wish mainly to provide itself with the money to build hospitals, schools, roads, etc., or it may use taxation as a device to spread the national wealth more evenly, in which case it will tax more heavily those who can best afford to pay taxes. This egalitarian tendency in taxation is very pronounced in many countries today. It is not possible in all types of tax to draw up different rates according to income, and it is for this reason that two types of tax exist—direct and indirect.

Direct taxes are those such as income tax, excess profits tax and death duty, in which the taxpayer pays his contribution direct to the government; indirect taxes, such as tobacco duty, sales tax and entertainment tax, are paid by the taxpayer when he buys certain goods or services.

Direct taxes can be graded, not only taking into account the size of a person's income, but also considering the use he makes of it and making suitable allowances. The proportion of taxable income may be reduced by allowances for expenses incurred on behalf of children of school age or dependent relatives or for money spent on insurance.

Such a system of grading is not possible in the case of indirect taxation. When you go to the cinema, the man who takes your money does not ask you how much you earn, calculate the tax incurred, and charge you accordingly. So that indirect taxation is the same for all sectors of the community, rich and poor alike. A drawback is that the burden of such taxation on small incomes is increased, since the obvious things to tax are those for which there is such a constant pronounced demand as to make them almost necessities. But the tax incurred by consumers of such goods must not be so heavy as to reduce consumption, since this in turn would produce a reduction in revenue, and would also have a pronounced effect on trade. A proportionate sales tax has the effect of imposing heavier taxation on consumers of luxury goods—radios, cars, refrigerators, etc., and this also ensures a more even distribution of taxation. But in spite of measures of this kind, indirect taxation imposes a greater burden on the poor sector of the population, since the rich devote a smaller proportion of their income to the purchase of taxed goods, even if their consumption of luxury goods is higher.

There are of course, many people who do not smoke nor go to the cinema and consequently avoid some indirect taxation. This is a pronounced drawback of the system to consumers of taxable commodities.

It might seem just to raise revenue by direct taxation only. This is not done for psychological reasons. Those who pay direct taxes are usually annoyed by the need to pay them, whereas people as a rule are not even aware of indirect taxes, of how much tax there is in the price of a packet of cigarettes or a cinema ticket. If we enjoy such things, we are anxious to earn more so as to be able to enjoy more of them, but we do not feel so inclined to earn more so as to be able to pay more to the government in taxes.

Death duty is a form of taxation which is not very popular, for most people feel it is an unfair tax on capital. But capital is usually the result of saving and it might be argued that income tax, which reduces the ability to save, is also a tax on capital. On the other hand, many people feel that all inheritance is unfair, since an heir may have done nothing at all to contribute to the capital which he inherits. Without savings there can be no capital, but a government may decide to make saving compulsory by taxation, devoting the savings to the development not of private companies, but of public corporations and national projects.

People save money for a variety of reasons, the two principal ones being a desire to assure themselves of some security in their old age and a desire to provide for their children and to give them a good start in life. Most people prefer a form of taxation to be paid in the distant future to a tax which has to be paid regularly during their life time.

A government may levy other forms of taxation than those described—duty, for example; this may take the form of import or customs duty levied on articles brought in from abroad, or of excise duty levied on goods produced in the country—tobacco and alcohol, for example. Such duties, or tariffs, may have two purposes; either to increase revenue by taxing luxury goods—motor cars, cameras, jewellery, or to protect national industry by making foreign goods liable to tax and therefore expensive—textiles, motor cars and alcohol, for example. Goods liable to excise duty in one country may be exempt in others, since not all countries have the same industries. The schedule of tariffs in most countries is so elaborate that there are firms which specialise in importation and exportation.

Imports have to be paid for in foreign currency, but if a country does not possess sufficient foreign currency, it may be necessary to curtail imports, which will in turn reduce income accruing from the levying of import duty. The effect of curtailing imports may also be to affect adversely a country's industry, if this is deprived of imported materials.

NOTES

device (n): something designed or adopted for a special purpose; **devise (v)**

egalitarian tendency: the view resulting from the belief in equality of all men
pronounced: strongly marked
death duty: tax payable by the inheritor on property he inherits
commodity: anything that is bought and sold
capital: wealth (money or property) which is used for the production of more wealth
excise: tax levied on certain goods produced and consumed within a country
schedule of tariffs: list of duties or customs imposed on goods imported or exported
accrue: come as a natural consequence

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19 Ranjitsinhji

NEVILLE CARDUS

Sir Neville Cardus (1889-1975) rose from humble beginnings in a Manchester slum to great fame as a cricket commentator, music critic and journalist. He is the author of *What is Music, Second Innings* and co-author of *The Noble Game.* The present piece is taken from his *From Good Days.*

In this essay Cardus has drawn a pen-portrait of a great cricketer who has become a legend in the annals of cricket.

CRICKETERS will never see the like of Ranjitsinhji; he was entirely original, and there is nothing in all the history and development of batsmanship with which we can compare him. His style was a remarkable instance of the way a man can express personal genius in a game—nay, not only a personal genius but the genius of a whole race. For Ranjitsinhji's cricket was of his own country; when he batted a strange light was seen for the first time on English fields, a light out of the East. It was lovely magic, and not prepared for by anything that had happened in cricket before. Ranji came to us.

In the 'nineties the game was absolutely English: it was even

Victorian. W. G. Grace for years had stamped on cricket the English mark and the mark of the period. It was the age of simple first principles, of the stout respectability of straight bat and good-length ball; the flavours everywhere were John Bull's. And then suddenly this visitation of dusky, supple legerdemain happened; a man was seen playing cricket as nobody born in England could possibly have played it. The honest good-length ball was not met by the honest straight bat, but there was a flick of the wrist, and lo! the straight ball was charmed away to the leg boundary. And nobody quite saw or understood how it all happened. Bowlers stood transfixed, and possibly they crossed themselves. I once asked Ted Wainwright, the Yorkshire cricketer, what he thought of Ranji, and Wainwright said, "Ranji, he never made a Christian stroke in his life." Why should he have done? The style is the man, and Ranji belonged to the land of Hazlitt's Indian jugglers, where beauty is subtle and not plain and unambiguous.

Marvellous game of cricket that can give us a W. G. Grace, English as a Gloucestershire tree, and George Hirst, as a Yorkshire broad moor, and Ranji as true to his racial psychology as any of them!

The game has known no greater spectacle than that of C. B. Fry and Ranji as they made a great stand for Sussex. I notice that Mr. J. A. Spender has described the Ranji-Fry combination as "the perfect display of the first-wicket stand." But Ranji never went in first with Fry: he always batted second wicket down, and thereby hangs a tale—and again the teller of it is Ted Wainwright. "Ranji and Fry," he would murmur as memory moved in him, "every year it were the same owd story. We used to go down to Brighton with the sun shining and the ground hard as iron. And Sussex allus won the toss. And we all went on the field and started bowlin", and, sure enough, we'd get Vine out and the score-board would say Sussex 20 for one. And then George Hirst would get Killick out quick, and we all of us said, "Come on Yorkshire, we're going grand; Sussex 31 for two!" Wainwright paused here in his narrative, and after a while he added, "But, bless you, we knowed there were nowt in it. Close of play. Sussex three hundred and ninety for two and

the same owd tale every year."

Bowlers have never known a problem so heart-breaking as the problem of Fry and Ranji on a perfect Brighton wicket. Happy the man who today can close his eyes and see again the vision of Ranji, his rippling shirt of silk, his bat like a yielding cane making swift movements which circled round those incomparable wrists. He saw the ball quicker than any other batsman; he made his strokes later, so late, indeed, that Lockwood almost saw his great breakback crashing on the leg stump while Ranji remained there at his crease, apparently immobile. Then, at the last fraction of the last second, Ranji's body leaned gently over his front leg, the bat glinted in the sun, and we saw Lockwood throw up his hands to heaven as the ball went to the boundary, exquisitely fine to leg, with the speed of thought. This leg glance was Ranji's own stroke, but it is a mistake to say he could not drive. Usually he was too indolent for forcible methods, but none the less his front-of-the-wicket play could reach unparalleled range and precision; and his cut was a dazzling lance of batsmanship.

He caused a revolution in the game; he demonstrated the folly of the old lunge forward to a ball seductive in length. Ranji's principle was to play back or to drive, and his many imitators contrived in the course of years to evolve the hateful two-eyed stance from Ranji's art, which of course, was not for ordinary mortals to imitate. He is today a legend. Modern lovers of the game, jealous of their heroes, will no doubt tell us that Ranji, like all the old masters, was a creation of our fancy in a world old-fashioned and young. We who saw him will keep silence as the sceptics commit their blasphemy. We have seen what we have seen. We can feel the spell yet, we can go back in our minds to hot days in an England of forgotten peace and plenty, days when Ranji did not so much bat for us as enchant us, bowlers and all, in a way all his own, so that when at last he got out we were as though suddenly wakened from a dream. It was more than a cricketer and more than a game that did it for us.

NOTES

Ranjitsinhji: (1872-1933) Maharajah of Nawanagar (Saurashtra) recog-

nised as one of the world's greatest batsmen

W. G. Grace: William Gilbert Grace was a great English cricketer whose performance in batting and bowling was superb

John Bull: the typical Englishman

visitation: trouble, disaster e.g. a visitation of plague. Here, it is used to convey what the English felt when faced with the merciless batting of Ranjitsinhji.

legerdemain: skill in performing a magic trick because of the quickness of hand. Here, it refers to Ranjitsinhji himself.

transfixed: stood still (in amazement)

crossed themselves: made the sign of the cross to avert evil

The style is the man: His style (in playing cricket) was such that it was part of his personality.

Hazlitt: English essayist (Reference is to Hazlitt's essay on 'Indian jugglers')

George Hirst: English cricketer who had 2000 runs and 200 wickets to his credit in 1906

owd: old

Brighton: a summer sea-side resort in South-East England

allus: always

knowed: knew

nowt: nothing

leg glance: hitting the ball on the leg side (cricket)

drive: hit with force (cricket)

stance: position taken for stroke

blasphemy: impious utterance

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20 The Unicorn in the Garden

JAMES THURBER

James Thurber (1894-1961) was an American writer. His stories are full of humour.

The present story is taken from Thurber's *Fables for our Time*. The story follows the pattern of the traditional fable which is a story about animals and birds and illustrates the collective wisdom of a people at a given time. But Thurber in this fable gives a turn which is rather unexpected. He thus gives the stamp of his genius to the story.

ONCE upon a sunny morning a man who sat in a breakfast nook looked up from his scrambled eggs to see a white unicorn with a golden horn quietly cropping roses in the garden. The man went up to the bedroom where his wife was still asleep and woke her. 'There's a unicorn in the garden,' he said. 'Eating roses.' She opened one unfriendly eye and looked at him. 'The unicorn is a mythical beast,' she said, and turned her back on him. The man walked slowly downstairs and out into the garden. The unicorn was still there; he was now browsing among the tulips. 'Here, unicorn,' said the man, and he pulled up a lily and gave it to him. The unicorn ate it gravely. With a high heart, because there was a unicorn in his garden, the man went upstairs and roused his wife again. 'The unicorn,' he said, 'ate a lily.' His wife sat up in bed and looked at him, coldly. 'You are a booby,' she said, 'and I am going to have you put in the 'booby hatch.' The man, who had never liked the words 'booby' and 'booby hatch', and who liked them even less on a shining morning when there was a unicorn in the garden, thought for a moment. 'We'll see about that,' he said. He walked over to the door. 'He has a golden horn in the middle of his forehead,' he told her. Then he went back to the garden to watch the unicorn; but the unicorn had gone away. The man sat down among the roses and went to sleep.

As soon as the husband had gone out of the house, the wife got up and dressed as fast as she could. She was very excited and there was a gloat in her eye. She telephoned the police and she telephoned a psychiatrist; she told them to hurry to her house and bring a strait-jacket. When the police and the psychiatrist arrived, they sat down in the chair and looked at her, with great interest. 'My husband,' she said, 'saw a unicorn this morning.' The police looked at the psychiatrist and the psychiatrist looked at the police. 'He told me it ate a lily,' she said. The psychiatrist looked at the police and the police looked at the psychiatrist. 'He told me it had a golden horn in the middle of its forehead,' she said. At a solemn signal from the psychiatrist, the police leaped from their chairs and seized the wife. They had a hard time subduing her, for she put up a terrific struggle but they finally subdued her. Just as they got her into the strait-jacket, the husband came back into the house.

'Did you tell your wife you saw a unicorn?' asked the police. 'Of course not,' said the husband. 'The unicorn is a mythical beast.' 'That's all I wanted to know,' said the psychiatrist. 'Take her away. I'm sorry, sir, but your wife is as crazy as a jay bird.' So they took her away, cursing and screaming, and shut her up in an institution. The husband lived happily ever after.

Moral: Don't count your boobies until they are hatched.

NOTES

scrambled eggs: beaten eggs cooked with butter and milk

unicorn: a mythical horse-like animal with a single horn growing from the centre of its forehead. (A lion and a unicorn are the two animals represented as holding up the English shield on the royal arms of England.)

browsing: nibbling at (The unicorn was eating the leaves of the tulips.)

tulips: spring flowers

booby: a stupid or foolish person

booby-hatch: American slang for an institution for the mentally ill

gloat in her eye: a look of selfish delight in her eye

strait-jacket: a type of coat without sleeves fitting tightly on a mad man to stop him from struggling

jay bird: any of several birds of the crow family (colloquially—a stupid, foolish or talkative person)

Don't count your boobies until they are hatched: This is an imitation of the proverb, **Don't count your chickens until they are hatched.**

1 Sea-Fever

JOHN MASEFIELD

John Masefield (1878-1967) ran away from home to become a sailor. In 1902 he published his *Salt Water Ballads.* **'Sea-Fever' is one of the poems in this volume. He has a number of volumes of poetry to his credit as well as plays and essays. In 1930 he was appointed Poet Laureate of England. 'Sea-Fever' is a powerful expression of the poet's passion for a sailor's life.**

I must go down to the seas again, to the lonely
sea and the sky,
And all I ask is a tall ship and a star to steer
her by,
And the wheel's kick and the wind's song and
the white sail's shaking,
And a grey mist on the sea's face and a grey
dawn breaking.

I must go down to the seas again, for the
call of the running tide
Is a wild call and a clear call that may not be
denied;
And all I ask is a windy day with the white
clouds flying,
And the flung spray and the blown spume, and
the sea-gulls crying.

I must go down to the seas again, to the
vagrant gypsy life,
To the gull's way and the whale's way where
the wind's like a whetted knife;
And all I ask is a merry yarn from a laughing
fellow-rover,

And quiet sleep and a sweet dream when the
long trick's over.

NOTES

sea-fever: extreme excitement or agitation provoked by the call of the sea

wheel's kick: a wheel at the bottom of the ship which produces a kicking sound as it pushes water

spume: foam, froth or scum

gypsy: Gypsies are people with no settled homes; they wander in groups from place to place. Masefield says he does not like the idea of a settled life.

gull's way and the whale's way: Gulls are birds found only near sea-shores and the whales are found in the deep seas. Masefield expresses his desire to be always on the sea.

whetted: sharpened

yarn: story

trick: Among sailors **trick** means the period of duty at the wheel which usually lasts two hours. **The long trick** could also mean his life on earth.

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2 On His Blindness

JOHN MILTON

John Milton (1608-1674) is one of the greatest English poets. His poetry was influenced by classical renaissance learning and Christian theology. He became blind when he was in government service as a secretary under Cromwell.

The present poem is his most famous sonnet wherein he regrets that on account of his blindness he cannot make use of his poetic talent to glorify God. Despite this handicap Milton produced his masterpieces —— *Paradise Lost, Paradise Regained* and *Samson Agonistes* —— during the dark years of his blindness.

When I consider how my light is spent
Ere half my days, in this dark world and wide,

And that one talent which is death to hide
Lodged with me useless, though my soul more bent

To serve therewith my Maker, and present
My true account, lest He returning chide,—
Doth God exact day-labour, light denied?
I fondly ask:—But Patience, to prevent

That murmur, soon replies; God doth not need
Either man's work, or His own gifts: who best
Bear His mild yoke, they serve Him best: His state

Is kingly; thousands at His bidding speed
And post o'er land and ocean without rest:—
They also serve who only stand and wait.

NOTES

light is spent: became blind
ere: before (old use or poetic). Milton went blind in his forties.
talent: The talent refers to the parable of talents in the New Testament. Once a rich man, before setting out on a journey, gave his servants a certain amount of money in talents. (Talent was a unit of money.) On his return the servants gave the landlord an account of the talents. Everyone of them but one had doubled his talents. One of them, who had been given only one talent, hid it and returned it to the landlord. The servant was punished for not using his talent. In the poem the talent refers to Milton's gift of writing poetry.
lodged: housed. Milton feels that owing to his blindness his creative ability has become useless.
therewith: with that. He can no longer glorify God by writing poetry.
and ..... account: a reference to the parable. According to the Bible one has to give God (as to the landlord in the parable) an account of one's deeds.
chide: rebuke or scold. Milton fears that he will be punished on his return to God after death.
fondly: in a foolishly optimistic manner
murmur (n): complaint
His mild yoke: the gentle burden (duty) placed by God on man
who best ..... him best: Now that blind Milton serves God in a better way by bearing His yoke, God does not expect him to use his creative talent to write poetry.
at His bidding: at the command of God
post: travel fast

They ..... wait: This line expresses Milton's irrevocable faith in God in times of trouble and hardship. God gives His grace to those who worship Him through work as also to those who patiently bear His burden. They suffer without complaining.

3	**Upon Westminster Bridge** **WILLIAM WORDSWORTH**

William Wordsworth (1770-1850) was a pioneer of the Romantic Movement. He and Coleridge together brought in a new movement in poetry, a return to Nature and also stressed the need for a more natural form of expression.

This sonnet was written when Wordsworth and his sister, Dorothy, were crossing Westminster Bridge, London, early one morning, on their way to France.

Earth has not anything to show more fair:–
Dull would he be of soul who could pass by
A sight so touching in its majesty:–
This City now doth like a garment wear

The beauty of the morning: silent, bare,
Ships, towers, domes, theatres, and temples lie
Open unto the fields, and to the sky,—
All bright and glittering in the smokeless air.

Never did sun more beautifully steep
In his first splendour valley, rock, or hill;
Ne'er saw I, never felt, a calm so deep!

The river glideth at his own sweet will:
Dear God! the very houses seem asleep;
And all that mighty heart is lying still!

NOTES

steep: soak or bathe. The city is bathed in the early morning sunshine.
mighty heart is lying still: *The throbbing activity of London during day* has now come to a standstill.

●●●

4	**Fear No More** **WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE**

William Shakespeare (1564-1616) is the greatest English dramatist and poet. This is a beautiful dirge from his play *Cymbeline*.

Fear no more the heat o'the sun
Nor the furious winter's rages;
Thou thy worldly task hast done,
Home art gone and ta'en thy wages:
Golden lads and girls all must,
As chimney-sweepers, come to dust.

Fear no more the frown o' the great,
Thou art past the tyrant's stroke;
Care no more to clothe and eat;
To thee the reed is as the oak.
The sceptre, learning, physic, must
All follow this, and come to dust.

Fear no more the lightning-flash
Nor the all-dreaded thunder-stone:
Fear not slander, censure rash;
Thou hast finish'd joy and moan:
All lovers young, all lovers must
Consign to thee, and come to dust.

NOTES

winter's rages: the winter storms

ta'en thy wages: According to Christian belief a person is rewarded or punished after death according to his deeds.

chimney-sweepers: (chimney sweeps), persons who clean soot from the chimneys

tyrant: cruel or unjust ruler

sceptre: rod or staff carried by a ruler or king as a symbol of his sovereignty

physic: medicine. The word was used for the medical profession in Shakespeare's times.

thunder-stone: stone popularly believed to have fallen as thunderbolts

slander: false statement that damages a person's reputation

censure (n): disapproval

consign: give up to

●●●

5 The Jet Age

V. C. DUTT

Viresh Chander Dutt, a modern Indo-Anglian poet, speaks for all the urban elite — the businessmen and the top executive — who have not a moment to spare for the simple things of life; and this they realize when it is too late.

'Tis the rush, rush, rush;
Oh, the babble of tongues;
Not a moment you can spare,
Oh, the tired lungs, lungs.

'Tis the rush, rush, rush;
The screech, and the hoot:
The road hogs, the jammed brakes,
There's a casualty afoot.

'Tis the rush, rush, rush;
The meeting of the Board;

They all talk but do not listen;
You are bored, oh, so bored.

'Tis the rush, rush, rush;
The office or the school;
With a half digested breakfast,
You pretend you're not a fool.

'Tis the rush, rush, rush;
You're back at home to rest;
Blast the after-dinner party
Ah! you have to look your best.

'Tis the rush, rush, rush;
But the still small voice—oh, stop.
Is it the heart or blood pressure?
Am I heading for a flop?

'Tis the rush, rush, rush;
Where's the time to stop or pray?
To listen to a poem,
Or to hum a tune, I say?

'Tis the rush, rush, rush;
Then the blackout—it is night.
You're one of those that had been;
That's right, that's right.

NOTES

babble of tongues: people talking all together so that nothing is understood
road hogs: motorists who are careless and have no consideration for others
casualty afoot: a likely accident or disaster
blast ..... after-dinner party: The poet is too tired to go out after his work; so he curses the after-dinner party.
blackout: here, it means death

●●●

6 If You Call Me

SAROJINI NAIDU

Sarojini Naidu (1879-1949), daughter of Dr. Aghorenath Chattopadhyaya, a distinguished scientist, began writing poetry at an early age. She was sent to England for her education where she met other writers who encouraged her to pursue her writing. She joined the National Movement and later became the President of the Indian National Congress. After Independence she was appointed Governor of Uttar Pradesh.

The following poem is one of her beautiful love lyrics.

If you call me I will come
Swifter, O my Love,
Than a trembling forest deer
Or a panting dove,
Swifter than a snake that flies
To the charmer's thrall...
If you call me I will come
Fearless what befall.

If you call me I will come
Swifter than desire,
Swifter than the lightning's feet
Shod with plumes of fire.
Life's dark tide may roll between,
Or death's deep chasms divide—
If you call me I will come
Fearless what betide.

NOTES

thrall: enslavement. Here, the snake is a slave to the snake charmer's music which casts a spell over it.

plumes: feathers, especially large ones used for decoration

chasms: deep cracks in the ground — figuratively a chasm means a wide difference of opinion or feelings or interests

betide: may happen (usually used with woe)

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7 Say This City Has Ten Million Souls

W. H. AUDEN

Wystan Hugh Auden (1907-1973) was at different times a teacher, journalist and soldier. But it is as a poet that we remember him today. This brilliant poet of the thirties used his talents to fight the ills in society.

This particular poem deals with the plight of the Jews in Hitler's Germany who became stateless and were persecuted.

Notice the monotonous rhythm and repetition that suggest the weariness and despair of the homeless Jews.

Say this city has ten million souls,
Some are living in mansions, some are living in holes;
Yet there's no place for us, my dear, yet there's
    no place for us.

Once we had a country and we thought it fair,
Look in the atlas and you'll find it there:
We cannot go there now, my dear, we cannot go there now.

In the village churchyard there grows an old yew,
Every spring it blossoms anew:
Old passports can't do that, my dear, old passports
    can't do that.

The consul banged the table and said:
'If you've got no passport you're officially dead':
But we are still alive, my dear, but we are still alive.

Went to a committee; they offered me a chair;
Asked me politely to return next year:
But where shall we go today, my dear, but where
    shall we go today?

Came to a public meeting; the speaker got up and said:
'If we let them in, they will steal our daily bread';
He was talking of you and me, my dear, he was talking
of you and me.

Thought I heard the thunder rumbling in the sky;
It was Hitler over Europe, saying: 'They must die';
O we were in his mind, my dear, O we were in his mind.

Saw a poodle in a jacket fastened with a pin,
Saw a door opened and a cat let in:
But they weren't German Jews, my dear, but they weren't
German Jews.

Went down the harbour and stood upon the quay,
Saw the fish swimming as if they were free:
Only ten feet away, my dear, only ten feet away.

Walked through a wood, saw the birds in the trees;
They had no politicians and sang at their ease:
They weren't the human race, my dear, they weren't
the human race.

Dreamed I saw a building with a thousand floors,
A thousand windows and a thousand doors;
Not one of them was ours, my dear, not one of them was ours.

Stood on a great plain in the falling snow;
Ten thousand soldiers marched to and fro:
Looking for you and me, my dear, looking for you and me.

NOTES

once we had a country: refers to Germany
yew: a tree usually found in graveyards
consul: a person appointed by the government of a country to look after its people and interests in another country
Went to a committee ..... today? Officials all over the world are slow to move files and this sometimes has a serious effect on the lives of people.

Came to a public meeting ..... daily bread: Most countries were hesitant to admit the refugee Jews as they were not sure of their own food. "Give us this day our daily bread" is a line from the Lord's Prayer which Christians all over the world say. The irony in the line may be noted.

poodle: a small dog with curly hair. It is a fashion among rich ladies to keep a poodle as a pet. In winter the pets are dressed in jackets to keep them warm.

quay: a structure by the water front for loading and unloading ships

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8	The Owl-Critic J. T. FIELDS

James Thomas Fields (1817-1881), American author, poet, critic and publisher, was editor of the 'Atlantic Monthly'. The present piece is a satire on pedantic people who usually go by their theoretical rules rather than by facts. Here, we have a learned man who has a lot of bookish knowledge about birds but who fails to recognize a live bird when he sees one.

'Who stuffed that white owl?' No one spoke in the shop.
The barber was busy, and he couldn't stop;
The customers, waiting their turns, were all reading
The 'Daily,' the 'Herald,' the 'Post,' little heeding
The young man who blurted out such a blunt question;
No one raised a head, or even made a suggestion;
And the barber kept on shaving.

'Don't you see, Mr. Brown,'
Cried the youth, with a frown,
'How wrong the whole thing is,
How preposterous each wing is,
How flattened the head is, how jammed down the neck is—
In short, the whole owl, what an ignorant wreck 't is!
I make no apology;
I've learned owl-eology.

'I've passed days and nights in a hundred collections,
And cannot be blinded to any deflections
Arising from unskilful fingers that fail
To stuff a bird right, from his beak to his tail.
Mister Brown! Mister Brown!
Do take that bird down,
Or you'll soon be the laughing-stock all over town!'
And the barber kept on shaving.

'I've studied owls,
And other night-fowls,
And I tell you
What I know to be true;
An owl cannot roost
With his limbs so unloosed;
No owl in this world
Ever had his claws curled,
Ever had his legs slanted,
Ever had his bill canted,
Ever had his neck screwed
Into that attitude.
He can't do it, because
'Tis against all bird-laws.

'Anatomy teaches,
Ornithology preaches,
An owl has a toe
That can't turn out so!
I've made the white owl my study for years,
And to see such a job almost moves me to tears!
Mr. Brown, I'm amazed
You should be so gone crazed
As to put up a bird
In that posture absurd!
To look at that owl really brings on a dizziness;
The man who stuffed him don't half know his business!'
And the barber kept on shaving.

'Examine those eyes.
I'm filled with surprise
Taxidermists should pass
Off on you such poor glass;
So unnatural they seem
They'd make Audubon scream,
And John Burroughs laugh
To encounter such chaff.
Do take that bird down;
Have him stuffed again, Brown!'
And the barber kept on shaving.

'With some sawdust and bark
I could stuff in the dark
An owl better than that,
I could make an old hat
Look more like an owl
Than that horrid fowl,
Stuck up there so stiff like a side of coarse leather.
In fact, about him there's not one natural feather.'

Just then, with a wink and a sly normal lurch,
The owl, very gravely, got down from his perch,
Walked round, and regarded his fault-finding critic
(Who thought he was stuffed) with a glance analytic,
And then fairly hooted, as if he should say:
'Your learning's at fault this time, anyway;
Don't waste it again on a live bird, I pray.
I'm an owl; you're another. Sir Critic, good day!'
And the barber kept on shaving.

NOTES

Daily, Herald, Post: names of newspapers
preposterous: absurd or senseless
owl-eology: the poet has invented the word on the lines of zoology, biology, etc. for humorous effect — to mean the scientific study of owls
deflections: deviations; here, it means changes
bill: beak

canted: Here, it means 'bent' or 'curved'. The verb **cant** means 'turn upon an edge' and is not commonly used today.
ornithology: the scientific study of birds
don't half know his business: does not know it at all
taxidermist: one who knows the art of preparing and stuffing the skins of animals
Audubon: American ornithologist and artist
John Burroughs: American naturalist
chaff: outer husk of grains; (fig.) that which is worthless
regarded: observed
hooted: Here, it is a pun on the word **hoot.** The cry of an owl is a 'hoot' and **hoot** is used figuratively in the sense of 'to jeer at people'.

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9	Death, Be Not Proud JOHN DONNE

John Donne (1571-1631) was a celebrated metaphysical poet and preacher of the 17th century. He wrote reflective and religious poetry. He was a clergyman of the Anglican Church; his sermons, which reveal a blend of thought and feeling, are fine pieces of English prose.

In 'Death, Be Not Proud', the poet personifies death and tells Death not to look upon himself as a proud destroyer of life. The poet is not at all afraid of death, because after death a new life begins — eternal life. It is Death that dies and not the poet.

Death, be not proud, though some have called thee
Mighty and dreadful, for thou art not so;
For those whom thou think'st thou dost overthrow
Die not, poor Death; nor yet canst thou kill me.
From rest and sleep, which but thy pictures be,
Much pleasure; then from thee much more must flow;
And sooner our best men with thee do go—
Rest of their bones, and souls' delivery!
Thou'rt slave to fate, chance, kings, and desperate men,
And dost with poison, war, and sickness dwell;

And poppy or charms can make us sleep as well
And better than thy stroke. Why swell'st thou then?
One short sleep past, we wake eternally,
And Death shall be no more: Death, thou shalt die!

NOTES

but thy pictures: copies or imitations; rest and sleep are mere pictures (copies) of death

then ..... flow: If we derive much pleasure from rest and sleep, then from death we get much more pleasure.

poppy: opium poppy; opium is a narcotic drug extracted from the poppy plant. It has a sleep-inducing effect.

why ..... then?: Why are you then filled with pride?

we wake eternally: the poet considers death to be a sleep from which we wake up to eternal life

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10 An Adventure

CELIA RANDALL

Celia Randall (b. 1887) is an Irish poet. 'An Adventure' is taken from Celia Randall's *The Leaping Flame*. The poet invites the reader to seek adventures—to discover 'amazement and wonder' in the lives of insects and small birds around us. However, the real adventure is to know the mystery of man's work which is the wonder of all wonders, in spite of the fact that in urban areas men are huddled together like ants.

Come, let us go, gaily adventuring,
Ride on a snail's shell
Into his kingdom, or, on a gnat's wing,
Poised on a heather-bell,
Find a new universe. Then let us pass
Into a bee's head, look through his windows,
Seek what he knows of the urge in the grass,
What he sees in the wild rose,
Learn his philosophy,

Peep at a world in a world
With another within it; see
In that other, another one curled
Ready to open. Each lens we look through
Tears veils asunder,
Brings something new
For amazement and wonder.

Back in our own world—what shall we then
Seriously think of this ant-heap of men?

NOTES

gnat: a small winged insect
poised: balanced
heather-bell: the bell-shaped flowers of the heather, an evergreen shrub
a world in a world: Every little creature in the world has its own small world.
asunder (adv): apart

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11 The Tom Cat

DON MARQUIS

Don Marquis (1878-1937), was an American novelist, dramatist, poet and journalist. Humour, satire, and cynicism mark his writings. The 'Tom Cat' is taken from his *Poems and Portraits*.

In this poem the poet considers the cat, a common domestic pet, an evil creature from Hell. In the poem 'the cat' is a symbol of fear and cruelty; through the cat the poet expresses man's primitive nature in spite of his pretensions of being civilized and cultured.

At midnight in the alley
A Tom-cat comes to wail,
And he chants the hate of a million years
As he swings his snaky tail.

Malevolent, bony, brindled,
Tiger and devil and bard,
His eyes are coals from the middle of Hell
And his heart is black and hard.

He twists and crouches and capers
And bares his curved sharp claws,
And he sings to the stars of the jungle nights,
Ere cities were, or laws.

Beast from a world primeval,
He and his leaping clan,
When the blotched red moon leers over the roofs,
Give voice to their scorn of man.

He will lie on a rug to-morrow
And lick his silky fur,
And veil the brute in his yellow eyes
And play he's tame, and purr.

But at midnight in the alley
He will crouch again and wail,
And beat the time for his demon's song
With the swing of his demon's tail.

NOTES

Tom cat: a male cat
wail: a cry of pain or grief
malevolent: having or showing a desire to do harm
bony: very thin
brindled: grey or brown with streaks
Tiger ..... bard: these describe the cat; he is brave as a tiger, evil as a devil and creative as a bard (poet and singer). These also refer to man.
caper: leap or jump playfully
jungle .... laws: refers to man's life in jungles before modern civilization
primeval: belonging to the earliest era of life on earth
blotched: patched
leer: to look with evil intention. It is believed that heavenly bodies like the moon influence the behaviour of living things on earth.
play he's tame: pretend he is tame
demon: an evil creature or spirit

12 The Road Not Taken

ROBERT FROST

Robert Frost (1874-1963) was the national poet of America. Today he is greatly admired throughout the English speaking countries. Frost, who was brought up as a farmer, was very close to the earth; he wrote of country-folk, farm houses, woods, small animals, birds, trees and of different sounds and hues in nature. Like honey in a flower-cup, there is always a little philosophy in each of his simple nature poems. 'The Road Not Taken', a piece from his *Mountain Interval*, deals with the problem of choosing one's vocation in life. The two roads can well refer to the earthly life and the spiritual.

Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,
And sorry I could not travel both
And be one traveler, long I stood
And looked down one as far as I could
To where it bent in the undergrowth;

Then took the other, as just as fair,
And having perhaps the better claim,
Because it was grassy and wanted wear;
Though as for that, the passing there
Had worn them really about the same,

And both that morning equally lay
In leaves no step had trodden black.
Oh, I kept the first for another day!
Yet knowing how way leads on to way,
I doubted if I should ever come back.

I shall be telling this with a sigh
Somewhere ages and ages hence:
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I—
I took the one less traveled by,
And that has made all the difference.

NOTES

diverged: branched off

yellow wood: As the leaves of the trees have turned yellow in the autumn, the wood looks yellow.

And sorry ..... traveler: He could not travel along both the roads at the same time. Spelt **traveller** in British English

as just as fair: both the roads looked equally attractive

grassy and wanted wear: The growth of grass on the road indicated that this road was not used by anyone; so the poet decided to take it.

Though as for that ..... same: In the final reckoning both the roads would seem to have been equally used.

I kept the first ..... back: As one road leads on to other roads the poet doubts whether he will ever come back and take the first road (which he hasn't taken now.) Once we choose our vocation in life we cannot give it up for another, even if the vocation we have not chosen seems more attractive.

with a sigh: sadly

And that ..... difference: The poet chose a path which was unsual and unconventional.

13 Middle Age

KAMALA DAS

Kamala Das (b. 1934) writes poetry in English and Malayalam. She has published two volumes of verse and short stories. She was awarded the Kerala Sahitya Akademi Award in 1967.

The poem reveals the heartbreak all parents, and especially women, suffer when children have grown up and no longer need them.

Middle age is when your children are no
    longer
Friends but critics, stern of face and severe
    with their tongue
It's the time when like pupae they burst
    their cocoons and

Emerge in harsh adult glory,
and they no longer
Need you except for serving tea and for
pressing
Clothes, but you need them all the same,
and badly too, so
That when left alone, you touch their
books and things, and
Weep a little secretly.....
Middle age is when your son to whom
you sent,
Once upon a time, the squirrels' invitation
to their
Jungle-feast, writing in golden ink and
posting
It at night, turns round in disgust, crying,
you have lived
In a dream world all your life, it's time to
wake up, Mother,
You are no longer so young you know.

NOTES

adult glory: the splendour of the new experiences of youth

the squirrels' invitation ..... feast: the mother used to create secret worlds of fantasy for her young children — here, the birthday party she arranges for him is supposed to be given by the squirrel.

it's time to wake .... you know: To a mother her offspring even when he is grown up is a little child. But youth rejects such childlike affection as childish.

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14	The Lake Isle of Innisfree W. B. YEATS

William Butler Yeats (1865-1939) was an Irish poet and playwright. He and his friend Lady Gregory led the literary movement in their country in the 1890's. He won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1923.

The poem, one of his early ones, expresses a deep longing to get away from the concrete jungle and go and live the simple life on the lake isle of Innisfree.

I will arise and go now, and go to Innisfree,
And a small cabin build there, of clay and wattles
made:
Nine bean rows will I have there, a hive for the
honey-bee,
And live alone in the bee-loud glade.

And I shall have some peace there, for peace comes
dropping slow,
Dropping from the veils of the morning to where the
cricket sings;
There midnight's all a glimmer, and noon a purple
glow
And evening full of the linnet's wings.

I will arise and go now, for always night and day
I hear lake water lapping with low sounds by the
shore;
While I stand on the roadway, or on the pavements
gray,
I hear it in the deep heart's core.

NOTES

Innisfree: a lake island in Ireland
wattles: plaited twigs
nine bean rows: He wants to grow just enough for his needs.
bee-loud glade: an open space in the forest filled with the sound of the buzzing of the bees
linnet: a song bird
core: centre

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15 Trains

HUMAYUN KABIR

Humayun Kabir (1906-1969), poet, essayist and novelist, wrote both in Bengali and in English. He was a cabinet minister in the Central Government for some time.

'Trains' is a lovely poem describing a train journey, as seen through the eyes of a child. One observes an implied comparison between the journey and our life; the destination of neither is clear to us. The words and images in the poem have the rhythmic and snaky movement of a train.

Mother, I sit by my window for hours on end
And watch the long trains rumble past,
Some are dark and journey tediously,
No doors, no window, no shining lamps.
Slowly they move: like huge elephants
That move like shadows in the shadowy dark.

Sometimes a train comes flashing past
With many windows lit by many lamps
That dance and whirl with movement swift.
A marriage procession with music loud,
Shrill whistles that rise above the din
Of the rhythmic beat of wheels revolving fast.

On hot afternoons you go to sleep
And with dizzy heat swoons all the world,
Even the crows doze and forget to caw,
The dog lies in the shade with hanging tongue.
I watch for hours and still the tireless trains
March on and on along their iron road.

Sometimes at night in my sleep I hear
The low distant rumble of the train.
I rub my eyes and sit upon my bed
And beneath the light of the flickering moon
Moves the long shadowy outline far away
Like a huge serpent crawling through the night.

Where do all these trains go day and night?
You say they bore their way through hills,
They roar over bridges across mighty streams,
They crash through forests and vast plains,
But at the end of their restless journeyings—
Where do they go and finally rest?

NOTES

rumble: move with a heavy sound
whirl: move around quickly
flickering moon: the moon shining unsteadily

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